

2012 Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office in the News

December 31, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Boyfriend of West Lafayette shooting victim charged with drug dealing

Written by Eric Weddle

A West Lafayette man whose girlfriend was found shot in the head at their apartment near Purdue University earlier this month has been charged with dealing drugs.

Louis Fromer, 34, was charged in Tippecanoe Circuit Court Monday with dealing in hydrocodone within 1,000 feet of a school, a Class A felony; dealing in hydrocodone, a Class B felony; and conspiracy to commit dealing in hydrocodone, a Class B felony. Hydrocodone is a controlled substance used as a painkiller.

Fromer remains in the Tippecanoe County Jail, on a \$100,00 surety bond and a \$10,000 cash bond.

Fromer was arrested Dec. 24 on suspicion of various drug possession violations, the day after police were called to his 733 N. Grant St. home for a report of a shooting.

West Lafayette Detective Lt. Troy Harris said the investigation into how 32-year-old Gretchen Fulks was shot is ongoing. Harris said the gunshot wound was not self-inflicted.

"What we are trying to do is find out whether or not this was an accident," Harris said. "Our main focus is the shooting."

Fromer offered to investigators an account of how Fulks was shot, but Harris would not elaborate on those details. Measurements and distances related to crime scene evidence have been sent to the state police for analysis.

Fulks remains in critical condition, Harris said. After the shooting she was taken to St. Elizabeth East hospital.

Following is a summary of what took place, according to the affidavit:

On Dec. 23 police arrived at 733 N. Grant St. and found Fulks shot in the head and Fromer in the house. During the investigation police noticed an expensive home security system. That lead them to obtain search warrants for Fromer's cellphone. Phone records showed Fromer had been texting with others about the strength and cost of pills, including hydrocodone, by using street names, such as "tabbies" and "kitties."

One of the people texting with Fromer was a confidential informant. Earlier that month, the informant purchased hydrocodone pills from Fromer at the Grant Street house. The informant explained that Fromer had a card reader connected to a phone so he could accept credit cards for the purchase of drugs.

Police found prescription information for Fromer that showed he regularly filled several prescriptions for hydrocodone, methadone and other drugs.

December 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette mom charged with posting teen daughter's nude photo on Facebook

SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman is accused of deliberately posting a nude photo of her teenage daughter on the girl's Facebook page. Her face, breasts and genitals were clearly visible, investigators said.

The mother, 50-year-old Lynda A. Rusk, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with child exploitation, a Class C felony, and possession of child pornography, a Class D felony.

A warrant has been issued for Rusk's arrest.

Rusk could not be reached for comment. On Wednesday afternoon, no one answered a published home telephone number in Lafayette for a Lynda Rusk.

The accusations against her stem from an incident that happened a year ago, on Nov. 8, 2011. It took a year to bring charges because of time required to subpoena Facebook and Rusk and her daughter's cellphone provider, along with time needed to review the paperwork and evidence, according to Detective Mark Pinkard of the Lafayette Police Department.

"We wanted to make sure to do everything we could for this young lady," Pinkard said of the victim, who is underage. "A major concern was, you never know who saw the photo. Anyone could have saved it or took a screenshot.

"Once something is posted online, it's out there forever."

Due to that, Lafayette police contacted the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for assistance. Investigators thus far have not found the photo posted elsewhere, Pinkard said.

The investigation began on Nov. 8, 2011, when the girl's teacher contacted police over concerns of her well-being. The girl had been staying with her grandparents since Nov. 1, 2011. But on the morning of Nov. 8, Rusk removed her from school. No one had heard from the girl since, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Though the photo itself was taken by Rusk's daughter, using an Apple iPhone, Rusk allegedly had possession of the cellphone when the picture was uploaded to Facebook, Pinkard said.

Information provided by Facebook and the cellphone provider helped to build a timeline and the case against Rusk, Pinkard said.

He credited a friend of the victim, who made attempts to contact her after seeing the photo.

Following is a summary of what took place, according to the affidavit:

When interviewed by police, Rusk told officers that she checked her daughter into a counseling center in Terre Haute after noticing the girl's nude photo on Facebook at 5 a.m. Nov. 8, 2011.

The picture, however, was first uploaded — via a mobile device — that afternoon, at 2:34 p.m. The daughter was at the Terre Haute counseling center from 11 a.m. Nov. 8 to 7 p.m. Nov. 9, and she told detectives that her mother confiscated the iPhone.

When confronted with the contradicting information, Rusk allegedly claimed to not use Facebook or an iPhone — though she had an iPhone herself — and that if she uploaded the picture, it was an "accident."

Detectives used cellphone records and towers to track the iPhone's location and route to Terre Haute from Lafayette, then back to Lafayette from Terre Haute, on Nov. 8.

The lead charge against Rusk, child exploitation, is punishable by six to 20 years in prison, if convicted.

Court records do not say whether Rusk has hired or been appointed an attorney.

Pinkard advises people who come across illegal material on Facebook or other social networking sites to flag it immediately and contact local police.

December 28, 2012: WLFITV

Man sentenced to 6 years for burglary



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFITV) - A Lafayette man received a six-year sentence including two years in prison after authorities said he broke into a business' locked office through the ceiling.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Joseph Rich, 20, pleaded guilty to burglary and attempted theft.

Harrington said Rich was sentenced to two years in prison, two years in community corrections, and two years of probation.

In March, police were called to the Suds Laundromat on Salem Street in Lafayette for a reported burglary. The owner told officers Rich was found in the Laundromat's office and the money box had been moved, but nothing had been taken.

Rich told officers he moved a table in the Laundromat and went through the ceiling to get to the locked office.

December 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Felony drug charges filed; Lafayette man is not in custody

Written by Justin Mack

A Lafayette man accused of multiple felony drug offenses was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe County.

Steven K. Whitaker, 22, was charged in Superior Court 2 with dealing a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance and maintaining a common nuisance.

According to court documents, the incident that led to the charges happened Feb. 2.

Police said a confidential informant contacted investigators and reported that Whitaker had offered to sell him ecstasy pills.

Arrangements were made to make the deal for six pills the next day.

On Feb. 2, the informant was outfitted with a wire transmitter and was dropped off at 500 S. 31st St., Whitaker's home.

After the transaction was complete, the informant and Whitaker exited the home together, and police were able to positively identify Whitaker.

As of Thursday night, Whitaker was not in custody.

December 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Chicago woman charged in card fraud

A Chicago woman is accused of stealing credit cards from two area women and charging more than \$1,200 worth of merchandise at local stores a year ago.

Shavonne Frances Scott, 24, was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with two counts of forgery, a Class C felony, and two counts of theft, a Class D felony.

According to a probable cause affidavit, she is accused of stealing the credit cards from patrons at two West Lafayette eateries on Dec. 30, 2011: Moe's Southwest Grill, 332 East State St., and Panera Bread, 328 East State St. On that same day she is suspected of making a \$272.12 purchase at a Walgreens and a \$1,009.90 purchase at a CVS with the cards. Additionally, the affidavit states Scott attempted other purchases at Walmart and over the phone to Bed, Bath and Beyond.

West Lafayette police used surveillance video, phone records and Scott's Illinois drivers license to identify her as a suspect in the thefts and forgeries.

December 19, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in molestation of 20-month-old girl

SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jonline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of causing severe vaginal bruising and swelling and a rectal tear that sent an acquaintance's 20-month-old daughter to an Indianapolis hospital last week.

Adam J. Jenkins, 23, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of child molesting causing serious bodily injury; two counts of child molesting by a person age 21 or older; neglect of a dependent resulting in serious bodily injury; and battery.

Adams was being held Wednesday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined \$125,000 surety and \$12,500 cash bond.

All four child molesting counts are Class A felonies — the highest-level felony, under murder, in Indiana and each punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison — because they involve allegations of penetration. The toddler's injuries included bruises and swelling along her genitals, arms, face and body, plus an old burn mark on her hand, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Though the girl's mother was not arrested, the Indiana Department of Child Services placed the 20-month-old with her biological father, said Detective Jeff Rooze of the Lafayette Police Department.

"I was told that's because we're still trying to get this case resolved and are still in the 'what exactly happened to her' stage," he said.

The girl's injuries did not require an in-patient hospital stay or surgery.

The investigation began Dec. 11, when the girl's mother and Jenkins took her to St. Elizabeth Central hospital because she bled during a bowel movement. But medical staff told police that the girl's injuries were possibly caused by a penis or object, the affidavit states.

Because the doctor suspected sexual or physical abuse, the girl was transferred to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis for further examination.

Jenkins had been watching the girl on Dec. 11. Rooze said Wednesday that the girl's injuries indicate prior instances of abuse.

According to the affidavit, Jenkins first said he attempted to relieve the girl's severe constipation. He then later admitted to being overwhelmed with the girl because she was crying.

Eventually, he made incriminating statements about molesting the girl.

"His story changed so many times," Rooze said.

Jenkins and the girl's mother told police the old burn mark was caused when she touched a light bulb.

December 19, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man charged for molesting 20-month-old girl

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces six felony charges and is accused of molesting a toddler.

Twenty-three-year-old Adam Joseph Jenkins is accused of repeatedly sexually abusing a 20-month old girl left in his care.

Jenkins was arrested after he and the baby's mother took the girl to the emergency room with bleeding, bruising, swelling, scratches and burn marks.

He faces four felony counts of child molesting.

Other charges include neglect of a dependent and battery.

December 17, 2012: WLFITV

Man chased, hurt his kids with air soft gun



TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A man was sentenced Monday for using a BB gun to harm children.

According to court documents, in August officers received information from a woman who said she had seen a bruise on the stomach of her 7-year-old granddaughter. The girl had told her grandmother she got the bruise when her father put a BB gun to her stomach and pushed her with it a few days earlier.

The girl also told her grandmother that her father, 28-year-old Justin Adams, had shot her 3-year-old brother with the BB gun in the buttocks.

The 7-year-old girl also confirmed the violence in forensic interviews, in which she described going into a bedroom while her dad was busy. She said her dad got mad when he found her in the room, picked up a BB gun and shoved it into her stomach, forcibly pushing her into the corner of a closet. The girl told investigators it hurt and scared her. Investigators confirmed there was a bruise on the girl's stomach that appeared consistent with a gun's muzzle.

The girl then told investigators her dad had chased her and her little brother, shooting her brother several times. She said the two kids hid in a closet and her dad shot multiple times into the closet door.

Investigators also conducted a forensic interview of the 3-year-old boy, who said his dad had shot him in the bottom with a pellet gun. The boy said it hurt and he had cried. Investigators found bruising on the boy's buttocks where he said he was shot.

Investigators then interviewed the wife of Justin Adams. She said she was aware Justin was shooting the gun at the kids, had shoved the gun into the girl's stomach and had hit the boy on the bottom with a projectile. She gave officers permission to check the home and an air soft rifle was found behind the couch.

Investigators also observed indentations in the wood of a closet door that appeared to have been made when Adams shot into the door. Furthermore, they found one of the pellets lying on the carpet in the room.

Investigators interviewed the defendant, Adams, and he admitted to causing the bruise to his daughter's stomach when he pushed her with the gun, but claimed he had used the butt of the gun.

Adams also admitted to shooting at the closet door while the children were hiding inside, and said he could hear them screaming while he was shooting the door.

He also acknowledged shooting the 3-year-old boy in the bottom, but said it was an accident.

Adams was sentenced Monday to 3 years: 256 days of which has been executed with the time served, and the balance on probation. He was also ordered to have a mental health evaluation and also to follow through with any recommended classes and proper supervised visitation with his children. He was also ordered to obtain his G.E.D.

December 14, 2012: WLFITV

Woman sentenced to decades in prison for fatal crash



BATTLE GROUND, Ind. (WLFI) - A woman will spend more than 20 years in prison for her part in a fatal crash in June.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Tamera Richards will spend 24 years behind bars and one year on probation for operating with a controlled substance resulting in death and being a habitual substance offender.

News 18 previously reported the two-vehicle crash happened on Harrison Road in Battle Ground. It sent six people to the hospital. The driver in the second car, Donna Wall, was airlifted from the scene and later died from her injuries.

Richards was taken to Franciscan Saint Elizabeth East Hospital the night of the crash where it was reported she had a blood alcohol content of 0.11.

December 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

West Lafayette spice dealer faces more than 7 years in prison, deportation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Juan L. Madriz was the first person in Tippecanoe County to be charged with peddling the once-legal drug known as spice, K2 and synthetic marijuana, after sheriff's deputies found some packaged in bulk at his West Lafayette apartment in August.

On Thursday, the 26-year-old was sentenced to seven years and six months in prison.

Because he's in the United States illegally, he also faces deportation. Tippecanoe County Jail staff confirmed Thursday that Immigration and Customs Enforcement has placed a hold on him, meaning deportation could follow completion of the prison sentence.

Madriz pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to dealing in a synthetic cannabinoid, a Class D felony, and possession of methamphetamine, a Class C felony.

On Aug. 2, Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies went to Madriz's apartment to look for a man involved in an unrelated disturbance, and Madriz agreed to a search.

Inside, investigators found a large bag that contained 45 grams of spice packaged in bulk, along with small plastic bags, scales, a small amount of meth and foil strips with burn marks.

Madriz was the first person in Tippecanoe County to be charged with dealing spice, an herbal mixture coated with a synthetic chemical that mimics marijuana's high — but with stronger side effects — when smoked.

The drug was marketed as incense or potpourri, often with labels stating "not fit for human consumption."

In 2011, Indiana legislators passed a bill that banned the distribution and possession of synthetic drugs that contained chemical compounds commonly used to create spice and another designer drug, known as bath salts. Manufacturers found a loophole by slightly altering the ingredients. A tougher version of the bill was passed this spring.

December 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 15 years in prison for drug dealing

A Lafayette man was sentenced Thursday to 15 years in prison, five years on community corrections and seven years on probation for selling methamphetamine.

Philip Santoro, 39, pleaded guilty in October in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to an amended count of conspiracy to commit dealing in meth, a Class B felony; neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony; and being a habitual offender, which is a sentencing enhancement.

Police began monitoring Santoro in January after a traffic stop turned up a small amount of meth on Santoro's passenger, and she admitted buying pseudoephedrine pills — a common ingredient used to cook meth — for Santoro.

In a subsequent traffic stop that month, Santoro's 14-year-old son was in the vehicle with Santoro and a co-defendant. More pseudoephedrine pills were found in various locations in the vehicle.

Under a plea agreement, Santoro is required to testify truthfully if his co-defendant goes to trial.

December 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces drug charges after gas station bathroom incident

Criminal charges were filed Tuesday against a Lafayette man accused of pushing his girlfriend down the stairs.

David M. Walker, 35, was charged with battery, confinement and criminal recklessness in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 2. All of the charges are felonies.

According to court documents, the incident that led to Walker's charges happened on the night of Oct. 28.

Police said Walker was temporarily living with his girlfriend when she told him he needed to move out and ended the relationship. They were having the conversation upstairs near the stairwell.

As they were having the conversation, Walker forcibly shoved the victim down 18 to 20 stairs. Walker then went downstairs and stepped on her ankle.

The victim suffered a concussion with loss of consciousness, contusions and sprains to her wrist and elbow.

December 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces drug charges after gas station bathroom incident

Written by Justin Mack

Felony drug charges were filed Wednesday against a Lafayette man accused of using heroin in the bathroom of gas station.

Jacob A. Johnson, 25, was charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court with possession of a narcotic drug, possession of a syringe, possession of paraphernalia and being a habitual substance offender.

According to court documents filed with the charges, Lafayette police were in the Citgo Station at 999 S. Creasy Lane on Nov. 11 when the owner reported that someone was passed out in the bathroom.

The door was locked, but police could see someone on the floor. With assistance from the owner, police removed the door handle and opened the door to find Johnson on the floor with his eyes slightly open and his pupils dilated.

While speaking with Johnson, police noticed a syringe cap on the floor, a syringe with a needle on the sink and a lighter on the toilet seat.

Johnson was searched before being taken to a hospital for treatment; police found two small baggies of heroin and a spoon in his pockets.

Johnson has three previous drug convictions on his criminal record.

December 11, 2012: WLFITV

Charges filed against Lafayette man who shoved girlfriend down steps

Dan Klein

WEST POINT, Ind. (WLFI) - Kenneth Hughes II, 29, of West Point, faces a felony charge after authorities said he spanked his 5-year-old daughter with a belt.

A woman, who is both aunt and guardian of the 5-year-old girl, came forward to Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies in May.

According to court documents, the girl came home with bruises on her neck and cheek, back, bottom and lower abdomen after visiting Hughes. When she was asked how she got the bruises, the girl said, "Daddy whooped me."

The girl told authorities Hughes hit her with his leather belt after she told a family member he had spanked her. She also said he would choke her with his hand and sometimes she couldn't breathe.

He faces a single charge of battery on a child.

December 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed against Lafayette man who shoved girlfriend down steps

Criminal charges were filed Tuesday against a Lafayette man accused of pushing his girlfriend down the stairs.

David M. Walker, 35, was charged with battery, confinement and criminal recklessness in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 2. All of the charges are felonies.

According to court documents, the incident that led to Walker's charges happened on the night of Oct. 28.

Police said Walker was temporarily living with his girlfriend when she told him he needed to move out and ended the relationship. They were having the conversation upstairs near the stairwell.

As they were having the conversation, Walker forcibly shoved the victim down 18 to 20 stairs. Walker then went downstairs and stepped on her ankle.

The victim suffered a concussion with loss of consciousness, contusions and sprains to her wrist and elbow.

December 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

West Lafayette man admits to child molesting; no plea agreement



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A rural West Lafayette man has admitted to making videos and taking photographs of himself engaged in sexual acts with a young girl.

Christopher D. Bunch, 54, pleaded guilty Monday afternoon — one day before his trial was scheduled to begin in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 — to all charges against him: five counts of child molesting, all Class A felonies.

Bunch, who did not have the benefit of a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, will be sentenced in February.

Investigators suspect videos and photos were made or shot between March 2009 and June 2010.

The girl, who was between 7 and 9 years old, is the daughter of a woman who used to live with Bunch, according to court documents.

Bunch's face is visible in one of the videos.

Charges were filed in August 2011 after sheriff's deputies were called to Woods Edge mobile home park off Indiana 43 North.

Bunch's roommates had been cleaning his bedroom when they came across a digital camera found under his mattress.

Police then got a warrant to search all computers, cameras and electronic media belonging to Bunch.

That turned up videos and more photos of the same girl and photos of a second girl, who was 12 years old.

Bunch faces a potential 20 to 50 years in prison for each count of child molesting as a Class A felony, which is the highest-level charge for that offense in Indiana.

Bunch was charged in federal court, from the same investigation, with 10 counts of production of child pornography.

He pleaded guilty to two of those counts in March in U.S. District Court, court records show.

Sentencing is pending in the federal case.

December 7, 2012: WLFITV

Sex offender moved, didn't tell police

Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Rex Duke Sr., 54, faces several felony charges after prosecutors said the registered sex offender did not update his address when he moved.

According to court documents, in August, Duke filled out a form stating he was living at a home in the 6800 block of Morehouse Road. But when a probation officer visited the address in October, current residents said Duke hadn't been living there for four to six months.

Duke was convicted of child molesting in 1987, criminal deviate conduct in 1998 in Cass County, and failing to register as a sex offender in 2007 in Tippecanoe County.

Prosecutors are also charging him as a habitual offender.

December 7, 2012: WLFITV

Former school volunteer convicted of child molesting

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A former volunteer at Lafayette Jefferson High School was convicted of multiple counts of child molesting Thursday evening.

A Tippecanoe County jury found Michael McShurley, 50, guilty on three counts of child molesting. McShurley had been out on bond but was taken into custody after the verdict was announced.

He didn't say a word to the News 18 camera as he was led away from the courtroom in handcuffs.

Jury members deliberated on four counts of child molesting for more than five hours Thursday afternoon. They found him not guilty on one of the counts.

McShurley faces up to 24 years in prison.

McShurley appeared on a News 18 noon news program in April 2010, asking for help with an effort he was making to help send Lafayette Jeff seniors with special needs to prom. He was also a member of the group "Broncho Dads," a group that volunteers to mentor kids during their free time.

The investigation began in June 2011 when a 12-year-old girl came forward saying McShurley had fondled her on multiple occasions over the previous two years. McShurley was charged in September 2011.

After the verdict, McShurley's defense attorney, Carl Sandy, deputy prosecuting attorney Kevin McDaniel, as well as family members of both McShurley and the victim declined to make any comment to News 18.

McShurley's sentencing has been set for Jan. 18, 2013, at 10:30 a.m.

December 6, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette mom pleads to leaving daughter, 4, home alone

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman has admitted to leaving her 4-year-old daughter home alone so she could hang out with friends.

The girl had half of a cold pizza and Oreo cookies to eat.

Kasey N. Goodwin, 30, pleaded guilty Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony. She did not have the benefit of a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office.

The charge is punishable by six months to three years incarceration.

Goodwin's sentencing hearing is scheduled for Feb. 7.

On July 12, a neighbor found the 4-year-old girl wandering through the parking lot of Pheasant Run Apartments, off Brady Lane. She wore a winter coat, though it was 89 degrees outside, and had a soiled diaper, according to court documents.

Goodwin and her daughter lived at Pheasant Run.

A Pheasant Run employee recognized the girl and let Lafayette police into Goodwin's apartment, which officers described as filthy, with food left out and clothes piled on the floor.

Goodwin, however, initially claimed that a friend was supposed to baby-sit the 4-year-old Thursday night. Lafayette police contacted the friend, who said that was never arranged.

Goodwin then allegedly admitted leaving the girl so that she could hang out with friends.

December 6, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

'Broncho Dad' volunteer guilty of 3 counts of child molesting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

It came down to the word of a slight, 13-year-old girl against that of a 50-year-old Lafayette man and caregiver she's known since infancy.

Did Michael S. McShurley simply show affection toward a child he considered one of his own, or was the touching — rubbing the girl's stomach when it ached, tickling her when she wore only panties, among other instances — sexual and meant to satisfy McShurley's desires?

On Thursday night, following nearly six hours of deliberations and two days of testimony, a Tippecanoe Circuit Court jury decided that some of McShurley's actions were a crime.

Jurors found him guilty of three counts of child molesting, but they acquitted him of a fourth molesting allegation involving the girl.

All of the charges were Class C felonies.

Each count stood for times in which the girl claimed McShurley touched her breasts and/or vagina, beginning when she was 8 or 9 years old and ending on June 12, 2011, when she told a friend's mother about the accusations.

Jurors convicted McShurley — a former Lafayette School Corp. board candidate who helped spearhead the Broncho Dads mentoring program at Jefferson High School — for the three most-detailed times the girl could remember, all of which took place in 2011.

They included a time when McShurley hugged the girl from behind while she was nude and had just showered; another instance occurred while they watched a movie on a laptop in McShurley's bedroom, the girl testified.

She also told jurors that McShurley would place his hand between her legs while in the car, with McShurley driving and the girl in the front passenger seat. McShurley admitted resting his hand on her thigh, but he was adamant that it was never toward the "inner" portion, near her vagina.

The last instance occurred on June 12, 2011, when McShurley allegedly placed his hand under her shirt as they watched television. McShurley's adult son was asleep on an adjacent couch, she testified.

Afterward, she went online to search for advice on what to do, then sent a text message to a friend's mother. That led to an investigation by Lafayette police.

"Most of the time, he was ... loving," the girl testified. "But sometimes, he was doing stuff."

McShurley's attorney, Carl Sandy, argued that the girl misconstrued acts of affection and that, due to mental health problems for which she takes medication, has falsely accused other adults of inappropriately touching children.

One of the falsely accused adults — the Indiana Department of Child Services investigated, and the woman was cleared — testified on McShurley's behalf.

McShurley testified that the allegations were "disgusting."

Jurors had a number of questions for the girl and McShurley when they were on the witness stand, respectively.

To the girl, they asked why she didn't say, "No," or get up and leave. Her response: "I was too scared to move."

Some of the questions posed to McShurley focused on his interview with police and why he didn't deny the allegations.

"I did. ... I did call it disgusting," McShurley replied.

But he also told detectives that the girl would never lie, which contradicted his defense during the trial.

McShurley is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 18.

Each Class C felony for which McShurley was convicted is punishable by two to eight years in prison. Those counts can be served consecutively, since they represent separate instances, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

But that will ultimately be left up to the judge.

Deputy Prosecutor Kevin McDaniel presented the case for the state.

December 5, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man who helped create Broncho Dads says touching wasn't sexual

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An admittedly "touchy-feely, huggy-kissy sort of guy," Michael S. McShurley doesn't dispute prosecutors' claims that he embraced a nude, preteen girl from behind right after she showered.

Or that, while driving with the girl next to him in the front passenger seat, he would sometimes rest his hand on her thigh.

Or that, at least once, he touched the girl when she wore no pants but had on underwear.

But none of it was sexual, said McShurley, 50, who took the stand Wednesday afternoon in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to defend himself.

McShurley, of Lafayette, is accused of inappropriately touching the girl, who was in his care, from ages 8 or 9 to 12. His trial on four counts of child molesting, all Class C felonies that involve allegations of fondling, began Tuesday.

Regarding the after-shower hug, McShurley said he "didn't even think about it. I just hugged (the girl) and left."

As for touching the girl when she was pants-less: "I was tickling her."

When asked by his attorney, Carl Sandy, whether he found the girl attractive or became aroused when around her, McShurley proclaimed: "That would be disgusting."

The girl, now 13 years old, came forward with the accusations on June 12, 2011, when she told a friend's mother. That prompted an investigation by Lafayette police, and McShurley was formally charged and arrested Sept. 1.

McShurley's attorney is arguing that the girl misconstrued acts of affection and that, due to mental health problems, has accused other adults of inappropriately touching children.

The girl testified Tuesday that she takes prescription medication for anxiety and, one time, tried to harm herself by repeatedly hitting her head against a wall.

But she insists that McShurley touched breasts and vagina — over and under clothing — on at least four occasions.

The girl and McShurley disagree on when the after-shower hug took place.

She told investigators that it was about one week before she disclosed the accusations to her friend's mother. McShurley claimed it was one or two years prior, when the girl was 10 or 11.

That day, McShurley said the girl had showered in the master bathroom attached to his bedroom and “walked out quickly” wearing a towel afterward. He could see conditioner still in her hair — “you could see it dripping,” he testified Wednesday — and told her to rinse it out. McShurley admitted to later opening the shower door to ensure the girl had rinsed her hair.

Questions by Deputy Prosecutor Kevin McDaniel focused on contradictions in McShurley's testimony and prior statements he gave to police. For instance, in a videotaped interview with Lafayette detectives McShurley repeatedly said the girl would not lie — despite his trial defense now that she's lying.

“Perception can become reality,” said McShurley, a former Lafayette School Corp. board candidate who helped spearhead the Broncho Dads mentoring program at Jefferson High School.

Jurors are expected to begin deliberations Thursday.

December 5, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 25 years in prison for dealing heroin

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man has been sentenced to 25 years in prison and five years on supervised probation for dealing heroin.

In January, police arrested 37-year-old Jeremy W. Thomas and his girlfriend, 20-year-old Lindsay M. Terry, after a warrant was served at Thomas' apartment, 724 Brown St.

Sixteen individually wrapped and “stamped” bags of heroin, 1.5 grams of cocaine, numerous prescription medications and hypodermic needles were among the items found there.

Thomas pleaded guilty last month to dealing in a narcotic drug, a Class felony, and possession of a controlled substance, a Class C felony. He was sentenced Tuesday afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Terry pleaded guilty to similar charges and was sentenced in August to six years in prison and four years on probation.

December 4, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man who helped create Broncho Dads on trial for child molestation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Was it misconstrued affection, followed by a false accusation?

Or did 50-year-old Michael S. McShurley, a former Lafayette School Corp. board candidate who spearheaded efforts to create the Broncho Dads mentoring program at Jefferson High School, inappropriately touch a young girl in his care?

That decision will be up to jurors this week in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, where McShurley stands trial on four counts of child molesting, all Class C felonies because the charges involve allegations of fondling.

Testimony began Tuesday afternoon. Witnesses included the alleged victim, who said McShurley began touching her — both over and under her shirt, pants and underwear — when she was 8 or 9 years old. She alleges that it continued until June 12, 2011, the day she told a friend's mother.

He was arrested on Sept. 1, 2011.

When asked by McShurley's attorney, Carl Sandy, why she didn't come forward earlier, the girl replied, "I thought all girls had to deal with that."

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify victims of sexual-based crimes.

The girl, now 13, told jurors that the touching always made her uncomfortable. But it wasn't until sixth grade, when she learned about molestation, that she realized the repeated touching was "wrong."

During several parts of the girl's testimony, McShurley shook his head in rebuttal.

Sandy is arguing that the alleged victim made up her claims.

He described McShurley, an Air Force veteran who was the patriarch of a blended family with six children, as "more affectionate than the typical person."

"He's accused of this and not guilty of this," Sandy told jurors during his opening statement. "He's hurt. He's upset."

The girl suffers from mental illness and began taking Paxil for anxiety when she was 8 or 9 years old, which resulted in the girl hearing voices that told her to harm herself, Sandy said. She admitted to that when testifying but said she's just recently learned her anxiety could be triggered by the alleged molestation.

The four charges against McShurley are tied to four separate incidents that the girl could recall. One time, the girl said McShurley hugged her from behind right after she showered and was nude.

He wore only shorts and apparently seemed aroused, she said.

Sandy told jurors the incident was misconstrued — that McShurley simply instructed the girl to shower again because she did not rinse conditioner in her hair.

Testimony continues this morning.

This is the second trial for McShurley in the past seven months. The first trial involved an older relative of this girl, and McShurley was acquitted of sexual misconduct.

December 4, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Two Lafayette women face charges in welfare fraud cases

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Brenda M. Chiarappa lost custody of her daughter in August 2010 after the Lafayette girl, then 9 years old, was found living in squalor and had to be treated for lice, scabies and flea bites all over her body.

But Chiarappa, 39, of Lafayette, still collected her daughter's Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Administration's child auxiliary benefits through April 2012 — a combined \$13,309.40, court documents allege.

Ruchelle L. Clouse, 35, also of Lafayette, is accused of carrying out a similar scheme involving her minor son. The boy was removed from Clouse's care in May 2009 — spending the next three years at various juvenile treatment or detention facilities, followed by placement at a relative's home since this past January.

But Clouse collected \$17,570 in the boy's Social Security Administration's child auxiliary benefits from June 2009 to March 2012, court documents allege.

In each case, the women should have lost access to their children's benefits.

Though the allegations against them are not related, both Chiarappa and Clouse were charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with welfare fraud and theft.

Clouse faces two additional counts of perjury.

All of the charges are felonies.

When interviewed in October by a special agent with the Social Security Administration, Chiarappa reportedly said that times were hard and she needed the money to help pay bills, according to a probable cause affidavit.

She agreed to cooperate and repay the \$13,309.40.

Clouse, however, was allegedly less forthcoming when she spoke with an SSA special agent in October 2011. She's accused of swearing at him, telling him to "get in line" and hanging up the phone, the affidavit in her case states.

Arrest warrants have been issued for Chiarappa and Clouse.

December 4, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Pair charged with cooking meth three times in local motels

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against two people arrested last week after a methamphetamine lab was found at a West Lafayette motel. It was the third time they cooked the highly addictive drug at various motel rooms in the past month, court documents allege.

Brandon D. Bulthuis, 31, of Lake Station, and Penny I. Osmundson, 38, of Lafayette, were each charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with conspiracy to commit dealing in meth, a Class A felony; dealing in meth, a Class A felony; and possession of meth, a Class B felony.

As of Tuesday morning, Bulthuis and Osmundson remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail, each on a combined \$30,000 surety and \$3,000 cash bond.

They were arrested Nov. 27 after a West Lafayette police officer, who was on routine patrol, smelled a chemical odor coming from a room at Prestige Inn on Sagamore Parkway West.

Osmundson answered the door; Bulthuis was in the bathroom.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Bulthuis initially claimed that the "shake and bake," or one-pot, meth lab found inside the room belonged to a friend. Items found included numerous Mason jars with liquid and plastic bottles containing a powdery substance — suspected reaction vessels for meth.

Bulthuis later told officers that he and Osmundson had stayed at various motels for the past month and cooked meth three times, the charges allege.

He claimed that Osmundson did not participate in the actual meth-making process.

Bulthuis is accused of paying or trading meth with other people in exchange for pseudoephedrine pills.

Pseudoephedrine is a common ingredient in cold medication and decongestants. It's also a key ingredient used to cook meth.

November 30, 2012: WLFI TV

21-year-old convicted of molesting 3 children



Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Jaime Saucedo, 21, of Tippecanoe County is sentenced to 36 years in prison after pleading guilty to child molesting charges.

Saucedo pleaded guilty to 12 felony charges last month including child molestation and child solicitation.

According to court documents, he molested three children at different times between Christmas of last year and May of this year. As a juvenile, Saucedo was disciplined for two counts of child molesting.

After his 36-year prison term, he will have to register as a sexually violent predator.

November 30, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue football player Dwayne Beckford might plead in bath salts case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Dwayne A. Beckford is expected to plead guilty to drug-related charges that got him booted from the Purdue University football team in August.

The hearing is scheduled for Jan. 14 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 4, where Beckford is charged with possession of a synthetic drug — bath salts, West Lafayette police previously said — and two counts of possession of paraphernalia.

Whether the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office offered 21-year-old Beckford a plea agreement won't be made public until the hearing.

On Aug. 20, police were called to Beckford's apartment at 108 S. River Road for an argument between Beckford and a female acquaintance. Because Beckford was on house arrest for a drunken driving conviction, his consent was not needed to search the apartment.

According to court documents, in Beckford's bedroom, officers found a broken glass smoking pipe with burnt residue, two pieces of aluminum foil with burnt residue on a dresser and a metal container with a substance that presumptively tested positive for bath salts.

It was Beckford's fourth arrest in 14 months.

Then-coach Danny Hope dismissed the starting linebacker nine days later.

One of the paraphernalia charges against Beckford is a Class D felony because of a 2011 conviction for the same crime. The two other counts are misdemeanors.

Beckford also has a pending case in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6, where the above-mentioned drunken driving case was filed. Prosecutors want his probation revoked because of the Aug. 20 incident.

November 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man pleads guilty in OWI fatal crash



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man on Monday pleaded guilty to operating a vehicle while under the influence of drugs, a decision that resulted in the death of his friend.

John J. Venters, 28, accepted a plea agreement Monday morning in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 1, pleading guilty to reckless homicide, a Class C felony, and a habitual offender sentencing enhancement.

Venters had earlier been charged with eight felonies including operating a vehicle with a controlled substance in the blood causing death, operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death while having a prior conviction for OWI and possession of a controlled substances.

As part of the agreement, those additional charges will be dismissed upon Venters's sentencing.

Combined the two charges could land Venters six to 20 years in prison. His sentencing hearing has been set for noon Jan. 4.

During a 20-minute hearing, Venters was questioned by Judge Randy Williams and attorneys about the agreement.

Williams said he normally does not accept such agreements so soon but that the court was inclined to accept the agreement earlier than usual given that the case had been scheduled to begin trial that day.

The plea agreement stems from a Dec. 30 incident in which Venters ingested prescription medication — Xanax and hydrocodone — before operating a vehicle with a passenger, 20-year-old Brandon Stansberry.

Venters drove east on Kossuth Street when his vehicle crossed the center line, striking a tree head on near South 12th Street. Stansberry was killed in the crash. Family members of Stansberry attended Venters's hearing Monday.

During the hearing, Venters admitted that he had ingested more of those medications than his prescription called for. Blood and urine tests showed Venters tested positive for additional medication including benzodiazepines, opiates, analgesics, anticonvulsants, antidepressants and narcotics, according to the probable cause affidavit.

Venters is facing additional OWI-related charges in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 6, for which he is scheduled for trial Dec. 13. Those charges include operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering a person, operating while having a controlled substance in the body, and being a habitual substance offender.

Those charges stem from an Oct. 2, 2011, accident in which Venters was allegedly found to have benzodiazepines, morphine and hydrocodone in his system, according to court documents. Stansberry was also injured in that October crash, which took place in the 1100 block of County Road 750 East.

November 22, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man expected to plead guilty to having drugs in system during fatal crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is expected to plead guilty to having a host of drugs in his system — among them, opiates and medication commonly prescribed to treat anxiety, depression and seizures — when he drove head-on into a tree on Dec. 30, 2011, killing his passenger.

John J. Venters, 28, is scheduled to enter a guilty plea Monday — the day his previously scheduled jury trial was to begin — in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, court records show. If he signed a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, details won't be public until the hearing.

The wreck killed his friend, 20-year-old Brandon Stansberry, who was riding unrestrained in the front seat.

On Dec. 30, Venters was driving east on Kossuth Street when his vehicle crossed the center line, went off the road and struck a tree head-on near South 12th Street. Stansberry died instantly.

Samples of Venters' blood tested positive for traces of benzodiazepines, opiates, analgesics, anticonvulsants, antidepressants and narcotics, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Officers recovered three different types of pills in a cellophane wrapper hidden in Venters' pants.

He was charged in June with eight felonies, including operating a vehicle with a controlled substance in the blood causing death; operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death while having a prior conviction for OWI; and possession of a controlled substance.

Additional counts of reckless homicide and being a habitual offender, which is a sentencing enhancement, were filed in October.

Venters faces additional OWI-related charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 for an Oct. 2, 2011, crash in the 1100 block of County Road 750 East that injured Stansberry. At the time of that wreck, Venters had benzodiazepines, morphine and hydrocodone in his system, court documents allege.

He's scheduled for trial Dec. 13 in that case on charges that include operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering a person; operating while having a controlled substance in the body; and being a habitual substance offender.

November 21, 2012: WLFI TV

Man charged after police find a meth lab in his truck

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces multiple felonies after detectives said his mother led officers to his meth lab in his garage.

According to court documents, in October, police went to a home on Priest Drive in Tippecanoe County where Nicholas Fields' mother told them she thought her son was cooking meth in the garage. Prosecutors said inside, officers found items and a device consistent with making meth.

Fields came home and admitted to officers he had been cooking meth for his own use.

Documents state officers also found an active meth lab in Fields' truck.

Fields faces charges including dealing and possession of methamphetamine and having an illegal drug lab.

Woman says she was never told she couldn't steal \$50K from employer

November 20, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman says she was never told she couldn't steal \$50K from employer

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A woman said it was all too easy to steal \$50,000 from her employer.

28-year-old Amy Bray of Rossville faces nine felony charges.

According to court documents, Bray was working as the office manager for Dr. Steven Mather, a Lafayette optometrist.

In June, Dr. Mather told police his accountant discovered the money was missing.

A trip to Regions Bank turned up 74 checks, all made out to Amy Bray and all endorsed with Bray's signature.

Mather told investigators an audit showed Bray had said checks were going to patients or had been voided or deleted, when in fact she had written them to herself.

Detectives say Bray first told them she didn't have a reason for the crimes, but then she said it was just there and was easy, and that no one had told her she couldn't take it.

November 20, 2012: WLFI TV

Stolen check part of attempt to open fraudulent account

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman faces three felony charges after authorities said she tried to set up a checking account with a stolen check.

According to court documents, Kelvonna Allen, 18, tried to open a checking account at the Industrial Federal Credit Union on Meijer Drive in October.

The branch security officer recognized the \$900 check she was trying to open the account with as one that had been reported stolen.

At first, Allen claimed the check belonged to her aunt.

But she later admitted an acquaintance had given her the check with instructions on what to say to the bank staff.

Jurors find Englert guilty of murder plot in Gibson killing

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Darren J. Englert opted not to testify during his trial this past week on accusations that he and two acquaintances plotted to kill Jeremy K. Gibson, a 26-year-old Lafayette father who was brutally beaten and buried in a shallow grave on a Tippecanoe County cornfield on July 6, 2011.

But jurors still got to hear Englert's explanation of what transpired that morning — thanks to his prior, related guilty plea hearing on March 16 to murder, which prosecutors played Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

And that may have played a key role in his convictions.

Friday night, following nearly five hours of deliberations, jurors found 21-year-old Englert guilty of conspiracy to commit murder, a Class A felony; conspiracy to commit criminal confinement, a Class C felony; criminal confinement, a Class D felony; conspiracy to commit battery with a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; misdemeanor battery; and misdemeanor possession of marijuana.

They acquitted Englert of conspiracy to commit fraud and two counts of fraud, which were all misdemeanors. Those counts were based on allegations that he and co-defendant Carolann R. Clear used Gibson's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — more commonly known as food stamps — EBT card at a Lafayette Village Pantry within a few hours of his murder.

Clear, 21, was Gibson's girlfriend, and she moved from Florida with her mother and into Gibson's apartment at 1018 N. Eighth St. not long before the killing.

Englert showed no emotion when the verdicts were read or when Judge Randy Williams polled individual jurors.

That was in stark contrast to members of Gibson's family, the majority of whom sat through every second of testimony that began Tuesday morning. Some wore T-shirts that read "Justice for Jeremy" and buttons with his photo.

Jennifer Gibson-Sargent, one of the victim's sisters, said afterward that she expected Englert's guilty verdicts to bring some peace. But instead, it was a reminder that Gibson's young sons, 3-year-old Dakota and 2-year-old Riley, will never truly know their father.

She's had legal custody of them since Gibson's death and is in the process of adopting them.

"Just seeing firsthand what those monsters did ... I just wish we didn't have to go through that," Gibson-Sargent said, referring to photos of her brother's unrecognizable, badly injured body.

Gibson had been beaten with a pickax or hatchet, and acid was poured over his naked body to destroy evidence. The acid burned Gibson's skin — destroying his fingerprints and leaving charred patches and remnants of yellow-tinged skin.

"Dakota's starting to get old enough where he's starting to ask about his daddy," Gibson-Sargent said. "He didn't get very long with his boys. I don't even have that many pictures to share with them together."

In July 2011, Englert and his co-defendants, Clear and 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams of West Lafayette, were all staying in Gibson's apartment.

Events that led to Gibson's death began with an argument on July 5, 2011, or early July 6, 2011, between him and Antonio Williams. It quickly escalated into a physical fight — with the trio accused of hog-tying Gibson, forcing him

into the shower and forcing him into a vehicle that belonged to Clear's mother, Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Deputy Prosecutor Emily Orsinger argued at trial.

From there, they drove around Tippecanoe County, picked up a shovel, pickax and hatchet from Antonio Williams' home and eventually stopped at a cornfield near U.S. 231 North and County Road 500 North, near Montmorenci, where Gibson's body was found in a shallow grave covered with mulch, soil and cornstalks.

Gibson suffered numerous blows to the head, but the fatal injury was a laceration to his spine that also severed two arteries, according to testimony from pathologist Dr. Allen Griggs.

Prosecutors charged Englert, Clear and Antonio Williams with identical counts of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, criminal confinement and battery — based on Indiana's accomplice liability statute, which states that a person who intentionally aids, induces or causes another person to commit a crime is guilty of that same crime.

"From the physical evidence, you know there was a lot of talking about how they were going to do this," Harrington told jurors during closing arguments. " ... This wasn't a one-punch fight, people."

Upon arrest, Antonio Williams provided investigators with detailed information of Gibson's death — even leading them to where he was buried and where the murder weapons were tossed off the John T. Myers pedestrian bridge, into the Wabash River.

Antonio Williams implicated himself and Englert in Gibson's gravesite beating, while Clear served as lookout. Clear's statements matched that.

But Antonio Williams, who provided Lafayette police with significant information on Gibson's death, died in January from lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after overdosing on methadone while serving time in prison for an unrelated robbery conviction.

A month later, in February, Clear signed a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office in which she admitted to conspiracy to commit murder, a Class A felony, and the remaining counts would be dropped.

The deal also required her to testify against Englert.

Englert, in March, then pleaded guilty to murder — but he didn't have the benefit of a plea agreement through the prosecutor's office. That meant standing trial on the remaining counts.

His attorneys, Earl McCoy and Chad Montgomery, argued that Englert was not guilty of the conspiracy, confinement and battery claims. During closing arguments Friday, McCoy reminded jurors that Englert accepted responsibility by pleading guilty to the lead charge of murder.

He further described prosecutors' plea offer to Clear as a "deal with the devil" and said Antonio Williams was the "monster" who spearheaded the killing.

"It doesn't take much to get her (Clear) to say what you want her to say," McCoy said. "You cannot believe anything Carolann Clear said."

In Englert's version of Gibson's death, his involvement was minimized and contradicted Antonio Williams' and Clear's statements.

Harrington pointed out that Englert's palm print was pulled from a plastic bag that covered the bottle of acid poured over Gibson's body.

Attorneys will meet Tuesday to schedule a sentencing date.

McCoy said he expects to argue at sentencing that the counts in which Englert was found guilty Friday merge into the murder count, which is punishable by 45 to 65 years in prison, since the crimes were all part of one event.

Having the counts run concurrently, or stacked, could violate double jeopardy, McCoy said.

"We also hope the judge will consider Darren's young age and his lack of much of a criminal history," McCoy said.

Harrington, meanwhile, said he and Orsinger believe that some of Friday's convictions can be added onto the murder count — more specifically, six to 24 more years, for a possible range of 51 to 89 years in prison for Englert.

To date, the suspects have never explained what prompted the July 5 or July 6, 2011, argument that ultimately led to Gibson's death, other than brief mention from Williams of Gibson disrespecting Clear and her mother.

Gibson-Sargent, the sister, told the Journal & Courier on Friday that the family believes it was because her brother anticipated gaining custody of his sons during a court hearing scheduled for July 11, 2011, and that he may have told all of them — Clear, her mother, Englert and Williams — to move out.

That was coupled by his learning she cheated.

"Carolann wasn't living the life that she claimed to be. Not only was she in a relationship with my brother, but with Darren and Antonio, too," Gibson-Sargent said.

Clear had testified Tuesday to beginning a relationship with Englert shortly before Gibson's death.

November 16, 2012: WLFI TV

Darren Englert found guilty on 6 of 9 counts

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The family of a murdered Lafayette man said a guilty verdict helps ease the pain Friday night, but not very much. After five hours of deliberation, a jury found Englert guilty of six charges related to the death of Jeremy Gibson last summer.

"I just wish he was here," said Jeremy's sister, Jennifer Gibson-Sargent. "I wish Jeremy was here so bad."

It's been a difficult week full of memories for the Gibson family.

After three days of trial, Englert, who has already pleaded guilty to his role in Gibson's murder in July 2011, was convicted Friday of six additional charges including conspiracy to commit murder and criminal confinement.

"I'm glad it's over," said Jennifer. "I guess I just wish that it would make things a little easier."

But this week's trial wasn't easy, forcing family members to relive his death, along the way gaining new insight on the brutality of it. For the first time, they saw crime scene pictures of Gibson's body, damaged by acid.

"The pictures that horrified me," said Jennifer. "(Englert) just stood there like it was nothing."

After the verdict was announced, Englert walked from the courtroom, escorted by guards, not saying a word.

"I wish just even a tear, maybe he would feel our pain for one second," said Jennifer.

Englert already faces 45 to 65 years in prison for the murder charge. The verdicts Friday mean he faces an additional six to 24 years.

"I think the verdict reflects that this is a horrific crime, a brutal crime," said Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington. "It should have never happened."

Harrington refers to Antonio Williams who died in prison earlier this year after being charged with murder. He was mistakenly released from prison by the Department of Corrections more than a year early on a different conviction.

"If (Williams) had been in prison, the likelihood of these three co-defendants coming together doesn't exist," said Harrington. "Unfortunately a young man who was working hard to have a good life died for no reason."

Making those crime scenes photos and the entire week all the more painful for Jennifer.

"Until we saw some of the pictures, it almost seemed like it wasn't real still and it was just a nightmare we're going to wake up from," she said.

Two things that are real are Gibson's two boys, Dakota Kye and Riley, who both two years old. Jennifer is working to adopt them both.

With them in mind, she said, regardless of the length of Englert's sentence, it's not long enough.

"Why should he have a life, why should he get to walk around with the rest of us, when my brother doesn't get to anymore," she questioned.

The jury found Englert not guilty of three of the nine charges, all related to fraud. His sentencing date will be determined Tuesday morning.

Carolann Clear who pleaded guilty to her role in Gibson's death and was the prosecution's star witness in Englert's trial is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 29.

November 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jurors see graphic photos, Purdue professor testifies at conspiracy trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

As detectives removed layer upon layer of cornstalks, mulch and soil from an apparent makeshift burial site found July 7, 2011, in rural northern Tippecanoe County, the burning sensation felt in their eyes hinted to what they would find.

There, in a shallow, 6- to 8-inch grave, was the badly injured, naked body of 26-year-old Jeremy K. Gibson, a Lafayette father of two who was reported missing that early morning.

Charred patches of skin from head to toe indicated where someone had poured acid over him, according to Detective Paul Huff of the Lafayette Police Department.

Huff, the department's lead crime scene investigator, testified Tuesday in the trial of 21-year-old Darren J. Englert, one of three people accused of conspiring to kill Gibson last summer.

Photos from the crime scene were shown Tuesday afternoon for jurors in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1, and Judge Randy Williams warned beforehand that the images were graphic.

Englert is on trial for charges of conspiracy to commit murder, criminal confinement, conspiracy to commit fraud and fraud.

He previously pleaded guilty to murder in Gibson's death but has yet to be sentenced for that.

In July 2011, Englert, Gibson's girlfriend, 20-year-old Carolann R. Clear of Lafayette and 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams of West Lafayette, were staying temporarily with Gibson at his apartment on North Eighth Street.

Events that led to Gibson's death began with an argument July 6, 2011, between him and Antonio Williams. It quickly escalated.

Many details of Gibson's death have already been revealed during prior guilty plea hearings for Englert and Clear, though Clear — as a witness for the state — took the witness stand Tuesday to again explain what transpired.

Englert, Clear and Antonio Williams are accused of forcing Gibson into a vehicle that belonged to Clear's mother. From there, they drove around Tippecanoe County — at some point stopping at a home just outside West Lafayette, where Antonio Williams stayed with an acquaintance, to grab tools and a portable gas container — before stopping near U.S. 231 North and County Road 500 North, where Gibson's body was found.

Investigators suspect that Gibson was beaten with a shovel, pick or short-handled ax.

Those items were found July 8, 2011, in the Wabash River, near the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge.

The tools belonged to Joe Orczyk, a Purdue University professor who Antonio Williams called "godfather" and "Professor O." Orczyk testified Tuesday that Antonio Williams and his son were best friends. He allowed Antonio Williams to stay at his West Lafayette home, though Antonio Williams did so only periodically. Still, he considered it Antonio Williams' permanent address.

In the months leading to Gibson's death, Englert often accompanied him, Orczyk said.

About 10 p.m. on July 6, 2011 — sometime after investigators suspect Gibson was killed and buried — Orczyk testified that Antonio Williams called him to borrow money for gas. He and Englert showed up at Orczyk's office at Purdue.

"They were not wearing shoes. They were barefoot," Orczyk said.

Inside his house, in Antonio Williams' bedroom there, police found a pair of white-and-black plaid shorts that had what appeared to be bloodstains. Orczyk said he believed Englert had been wearing those shorts.

When an acquaintance reported Gibson missing on July 7, 2011, police immediately suspected foul play due to apparent bloodstains found scattered throughout Gibson's kitchen and bathroom.

Found under Gibson's kitchen stove was a pair of shorts and a T-shirt with bloodstains, Huff testified.

Antonio Williams died in January from lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after overdosing on methadone while serving time in prison for an unrelated robbery conviction. His co-defendants have pinned the physical beating on him.

Englert's trial is expected to end Friday.

November 14, 2012: WLFI TV

Prosecution calls key witness on day one of the Darren Englert trial

Kelly Roberts

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The family of a murdered Lafayette man packed Superior Court One at the Tippecanoe County Courthouse for day one of the trial of one of the accused. Darren Englert is on trial for a number of felonies including criminal confinement and conspiracy to commit murder. Wednesday the prosecution called Carolann Clear to the witness stand. Clear said she was with Englert and Antonio Williams when 26-year-old Jeremy Gibson was murdered on July 6, 2011.

It was an emotional day in the courtroom as the Gibson, Englert, and Clear families listened to Clear recall what happened the night Gibson died. At one point it was so emotional, Gibson's brother, Joe Gibson, was kicked out of the courtroom.

Clear spent about three hours on the stand being questioned by the prosecution and defense. Clear said before the murder she was dating Gibson, but in the last days leading up to the murder she started dating Englert.

Clear described how Englert and Williams, who died in prison earlier this year, started beating Gibson up at his home on North Eighth Street in the early morning of July 6. She said then all four of them got into a car. Williams drove to a field in Tippecanoe County.

Once there, Clear said she saw Englert and Williams striking Gibson. After Gibson was killed Clear admitted seeing a pickaxe and hatchet. She also admitted to getting a shovel out of the car and giving it to Williams who dug a grave, and put Gibson's body in it.

Clear cried during most of her testimony. She screamed loudly when she was shown pictures of a dead Gibson. Just moments before those pictures were shown Joe Gibson was kicked out of the courtroom after the judge said he was talking inappropriately about the case to defense attorneys and Clear's mother.

Joe Gibson is not allowed to return to the courtroom for the remainder of the trial. If he does he will be arrested for contempt of court.

"I just can't keep my mouth shut every time the defense says something about Antonio [Williams]," Joe Gibson said. "Then, sitting next to Darren [Englert] just bothers me."

The reason the fight on July 6 started in the first place wasn't given during testimony. But prosecutors referred back to Clear's interviews with police soon after the murder. She said Williams thought she and Clear's mother, who lived at the home, were being disrespected by Gibson.

Englert already pleaded guilty to murder in March. Clear pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit murder and fraud in exchange that seven felonies including murder were dropped. She is set to be sentenced November 29.

Englert's family expects the trial to last until Friday.

November 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Englert back in court for murder conspiracy trial for Jeremy Gibson's homicide

Opening statements will be delivered Wednesday morning in the trial of a Lafayette man accused of conspiring with two acquaintances to kill 26-year-old Jeremy K. Gibson in July 2011.

Jury selection for Darren J. Englert's trial took place all day Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

Englert, 21, of Lafayette, is accused of conspiring with Gibson's girlfriend, 20-year-old Carolann R. Clear of Lafayette, and another acquaintance, 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams of West Lafayette, to kill Gibson.

They allegedly forced Gibson, a father of two, from his apartment on North Eighth Street and drove to a cornfield at U.S. 231 and County Road 500 South, near Montmorenci.

Englert previously pleaded guilty to murder. He's standing trial for conspiracy to commit murder, criminal confinement and other felonies.

November 13, 2012: WLFI TV

Jury selection begins in murder trial

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WFLI) - Darren Englert pleaded guilty to murder back in March but later tried to withdraw that plea.

He's on trial this week for conspiracy to commit murder and criminal confinement charges in the death of Jeremy Gibson, 26.

Gibson was beaten to death in July of 2011.

His body was found in a shallow grave in western Tippecanoe County.

In a handwritten letter from jail Englert claimed he was not of sound mind when he originally agreed to pleaded guilty to murder.

-However it was rejected by the court.

If jury selection is completed today opening arguments could begin this afternoon.

November 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Answers may come this week in Gibson murder trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Some questions could be answered this week in the brutal beating death of 26-year-old Jeremy K. Gibson on July 6, 2011, allegedly by three people he allowed to temporarily stay in his Lafayette apartment that summer.

One of the suspects, 21-year-old Darren J. Englert of Lafayette, is expected to stand trial beginning today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 for charges that include conspiracy to commit murder and criminal confinement — despite repeated attempts by Englert and his defense attorneys to have them dismissed as Englert's counsel.

Judge Randy Williams denied the attorneys' most recent motion to withdraw during a hearing held Friday afternoon. The hearing was a last-ditch effort, with the Tippecanoe County Courthouse closed Monday for Veterans Day.

Englert is accused of conspiring with Gibson's girlfriend, 20-year-old Carolann R. Clear of Lafayette, and another acquaintance, 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams of West Lafayette, to kill Gibson.

They allegedly forced Gibson, a father of two, from his apartment on North Eighth Street and drove to a cornfield at U.S. 231 and County Road 500 South, near Montmorenci.

Gibson's body was found on July 8, 2011, buried in a shallow grave there. He had been beaten with a pickax or shovel, and acid was poured over his body.

The suspects have never publicly stated a motive behind the crime, though how it happened has been partially detailed by them in open court proceedings. Clear and her mother had moved to Lafayette from Florida just weeks before Gibson's death, investigators and Gibson's family previously told the Journal & Courier.

Clear has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder and, under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, she's expected to testify at Englert's trial. She claimed to serve as a lookout and fingered Antonio Williams and Englert in the actual beating.

Englert previously pleaded guilty to the murder count alone but — compared to what Clear admitted — appears to have minimized his role in Englert's death, instead placing the physical beating on Antonio Williams.

Williams died in January from lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after overdosing on methadone while serving time in prison for an unrelated robbery conviction.

November 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Life sentence confirmed for man guilty in two Greater Lafayette rapes

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

With his earliest possible release date not until May 28, 2045, Indiana Department of Correction inmate Robert Day, 44, already faced a potential life sentence for his 2006 conviction in Marion County for rape.

On Friday, Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel ensured that the Indianapolis man — barring any successful appeals — will indeed stay behind bars for life.

Daniel sentenced Day to 80 years in prison for raping two women whose apartments, one in West Lafayette and the other in Lafayette, he broke into 16 years ago. Day won't begin serving it until he completes the Marion County sentence.

"Your criminal history ... I won't get into all of it, but it's six pages long," Daniel said. "It's the longest one that I've ever seen."

When asked by the judge if he had anything to say, Day replied with only, "Trust my fate."

Day wasn't charged with the Tippecanoe County sexual assaults until 2011, when investigators learned that his DNA came back as a match to two cold cases: a 47-year-old West Lafayette woman who was raped on June 16, 1996, and a 44-year-old Lafayette woman who was raped on July 23, 1996.

Neither woman knew Day. They woke up during the early morning hours and found a strange man.

One of the victims testified Friday that her assault affected her marriage.

The Journal & Courier typically does not identify the victims of sexual-based crimes.

In both rapes, the suspect left behind semen, which was collected with other evidence for a sexual assault kit. In 1996, however, investigators did not have a readily available database to compare DNA samples collected from prior crimes or incidents.

The FBI launched its Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, in 1998. But even then, it was some time before all states began contributing samples, and at first it was only for the most serious offenses.

Because of similarities in the 1996 rapes — both the suspects' descriptions and how the crimes matched — West Lafayette police Detective Sgt. Cindy Marion and Lafayette police Detective Paul Huff decided to combine efforts, after which they learned the crimes were indeed committed by the same man.

Last summer, detectives got word from the Indiana State Police lab that the evidence was still available, so Marion and Huff asked the lab to run it again — leading to the match with Day.

His attorney, Tom O'Brien, told the judge that Day is remorseful and accepted responsibility.

"He wishes there was a way to make it right," O'Brien said.

Deputy Prosecutor Emily Orsinger, however, argued that Day did not come forward until after investigators learned about the DNA match.

Day pleaded guilty last month to two counts of rape as a Class A felony, and this occurred one day before his scheduled jury trial.

On Friday, Daniel deemed Day a credit-restricted felon, which means he will receive one day of credit for every six days served. Inmates in Indiana typically qualify for one day of credit for each day behind bars.

He also was found to be a sexually violent predator with a high risk of re-offending.

November 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

West Lafayette man faces prison, deportation for dealing spice

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man faces prison time and deportation from the United States after admitting Friday to peddling the once-legal synthetic drug known as spice, K2 and fake marijuana.

Juan L. Madriz, 26, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to dealing in a synthetic cannabinoid, a Class D felony, and to possession of methamphetamine, a Class C felony.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, additional charges of possession of a synthetic cannabinoid, maintaining a common nuisance and possession of paraphernalia could be dropped.

Madriz is scheduled for sentencing Dec. 13 by Judge Randy Williams.

On Aug. 2, Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputies went to Madriz's apartment to look for a man involved in an unrelated disturbance, and Madriz agreed to a search.

Inside, investigators found a large bag that contained 45 grams of spice packaged in bulk, along with small plastic bags, scales, a small amount of meth and foil strips with burn marks.

Madriz was the first person in Tippecanoe County to be charged with dealing spice, an herbal mixture coated with a synthetic chemical that mimics marijuana's high — but with stronger side effects — when smoked.

The drug was marketed as incense or potpourri, often with labels stating "not fit for human consumption."

In 2011, Indiana legislators passed a bill that banned the distribution and possession of synthetic drugs that contained chemical compounds commonly used to create spice and another designer drug, known as bath salts. Manufacturers, however, found a loophole by slightly altering the ingredients, and a tougher version of the bill was passed this spring.

Madriz, who is in the U.S. illegally, remains in the Tippecanoe County Jail. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has placed a hold on him, meaning he'll likely be deported upon completing his sentence.

He faces two years and six months to 11 years in prison for dealing spice and possession of meth.

November 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette drug plea nets man 34-year sentence

A Lafayette man was sentenced to 34 years Thursday for dealing cocaine.

Richard Hawkins, 28, will spend 30 years of his sentence at the Indiana Department of Corrections, and the remaining four at Tippecanoe County Community Corrections at a level to be determined.

According to court documents, Hawkins plead guilty to dealing cocaine and to possession of cocaine on Aug. 2.

The incidents that led to his incarceration happened in September 2011.

On Sept. 2, 2011, information was provided to the Drug Task Force about Hawkins dealing cocaine from a condominium on Valley Street. The task force then made a controlled purchase of 1.2 grams of crack cocaine.

Two more controlled buys were performed on Sept. 7, 2011, and Sept. 26, 2011, for 0.53 grams and 0.86 grams of cocaine, respectively.

After the third controlled buy, Lafayette police officers entered the apartment and arrested Hawkins. A search of the residence led to the discovery of pills of seroquel and clonazepam, 2.4 grams of marijuana, a digital scale, a box of sandwich baggies missing their corners and a handgun holster.

When interviewed by police, Hawkins denied being a dealer but admitted to using cocaine.

November 1, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette mom, 34, faces neglect charges

A Lafayette woman was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 1 with neglect of a dependent resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

Court documents allege that Leona Willis, 34, took her 4-month-old son to the emergency room on Dec. 7, 2011. He was found to have a skull fracture, and police were contacted.

During the course of the investigation, Willis provided several possible explanations for the baby's injury, including a suggestion that it resulted from a fall off a bed a couple weeks earlier.

The baby, identified as "C.Q." in the affidavit filed Thursday, was transported from Lafayette to Peyton Manning Children's Hospital and later to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis for further treatment.

Detectives said Willis made contact with Charles Quinn, who said she and the baby showed up at his apartment shortly before noon on Dec. 6, 2011. Quinn said Willis put the baby on the bed and the two of them had sex there.

Afterward, Willis told Quinn she thought something was wrong with the baby but declined to take him to the doctor. Willis said after sex she had gone to the bathroom and heard C.Q. crying when she came out.

"His head looked misshapen or big," she told detectives, but she did not yet take him to the emergency room.

The St. Vincent's Hospital Child Protection Team said the injuries were described as physical abuse involving abusive head trauma with significant force used. "The falls from a bed as described by Willis would not account for the extensive and severe skull fractures," according to the affidavit.

As a result of his injuries, C.Q. developed a seizure disorder, blood loss anemia, right side paresis, feeding difficulties and swallowing dysfunction. He also was deemed at risk to develop epilepsy and visual compromise.

October 31, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man fails to register as sex offender



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A Lafayette man faces two felonies for failing to register as a sex offender.

According to court documents, 47-year-old Russell Crosby is charged with failure to register, failure to register while having a prior, unrelated conviction and being a habitual offender.

In April, Crosby was released from prison and signed a form saying he would be living on North Fourth Street in Lafayette. But officers said the address he gave doesn't exist.

A nearby resident told officers Crosby had stayed with him for a few days but left because he was unable to have people stay with him. Another man said Crosby stayed with him for a few weeks but said Crosby was removed and warned for trespassing.

Investigators say Crosby was convicted of sexual misconduct with a minor in 2005. He must register as a sex offender for ten years.

Crosby was previously convicted for failing to register as a sex offender in 2010.

October 30, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Couple to plead guilty in 4-county marijuana operation

A former West Lafayette couple is expected to plead guilty to running a marijuana growing operation that spanned Tippecanoe, Benton, Warren and White counties.

Evan B. Mooneyhan, 26, and his wife, 25-year-old Amanda M. Mooneyhan, both of Carmel, had been scheduled to stand trial beginning Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 for charges that included corrupt business influence, money laundering and conspiracy to deal marijuana.

They're now slated to enter guilty pleas on Dec. 6. Details of any signed plea agreement won't be available until that hearing.

The charges are based on a joint investigation in 2011 by the Hamilton-Boone County Drug Task Force and Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force. It began when a confidential informant arranged to purchase a pound of marijuana.

Court documents allege that a search of the couple's former address on Tippecanoe County road 500 West turned up maps in several locations where marijuana plants were harvested. Nearly 180 plants were recovered in four counties based on those maps.

October 29, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man sentenced for posing as taxi driver, raping passenger

A Lafayette man convicted of posing as a taxi driver and raping an unconscious passenger was sentenced today to 23 ½ years in prison and must register for life as a sexually violent predator.

Last month, a Tippecanoe Circuit Court jury found 32-year-old Jacob I. Stidham guilty of rape, a Class B felony; two counts of criminal confinement, a Class C felony; public indecency, a misdemeanor; and battery, a misdemeanor.

Jurors acquitted him of attempted criminal deviate conduct, a Class B felony, based on allegations that he tried to force another passenger to perform oral sex, and receiving stolen property, a misdemeanor.

The charges stemmed from accusations that Stidham picked up two women from Chauncey Hill shortly after bars there closed on March 6, 2011.

The women, who were visiting from out-of-town, told investigators that they wrongly assumed Stidham's vehicle was a taxi even though it lacked a tax sign or a meter.

One of the women prior to Stidham's arrival had called a taxi service for a ride to a friend's home near Indiana 26 East and Interstate 65. When Stidham pulled up, one of the women asked if he was there to pick them up, and he indicated yes.

The victims testified during Stidham's trial and wrote letters to the court prior to today's sentencing hearing.

"It's clear their lives were destructed by what you did," Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel said, referencing the letters.

Daniel also noted that Stidham appeared to have planned out the crime beforehand, based on accusations that he told one victim "not to bother" to use her cellphone, as it would not work where they were, along Old Romney Road.

The victim who was sexually assaulted had consumed numerous alcoholic beverages and passed out in the backseat of Stidham's sport utility vehicle shortly after getting inside. Her friend, who was alert, sat next to Stidham in the front passenger seat.

Her recollection of what took place provided the groundwork for the allegations against Stidham.

After getting into the "taxi," the woman said Stidham initially drove east on Indiana 26, but he turned south shortly after crossing into downtown Lafayette — reportedly to avoid traffic.

The woman testified that Stidham then offered to have "fun" and exposed his penis.

After three tries, she managed to get through to 911. But Stidham then stopped his vehicle and shoved the woman out — speeding off with her friend still passed out in the backseat.

The second woman later showed up at a gas station on Old U.S. 231 South, but she could not recall what happened.

The rape charge was based on her medical examination and injuries, which were consistent with forceful and/or nonconsensual penetration, according to a sexual-assault nurse's testimony.

Stidham wasn't identified as a potential suspect until June 2011, when secretions on one victim's buttocks and neck returned a match to Stidham's DNA. His DNA was in the FBI's Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, after a 2008 arrest for a sex offense in California for which Stidham was later acquitted.

He claimed at trial to meeting the woman outside a bar in Chauncey Village, then going back to his vehicle for consensual sex.

But that was refuted by testimony from Stidham's friend, who told investigators that Stidham told him on March 7, 2011 — a day later — about meeting two women at a bar, dropping off one of them and having sex with the other.

Stidham did not testify during Monday's sentencing hearing.

His mother, Nita Stidham, did and told the judge that Stidham was himself the victim of repeated molestation, beginning when he was 3 years old, by a family friend. The allegations were never reported, she said, and Stidham never received therapy.

Being labeled a sexually violent predator means that Stidham will be checked on by law enforcement every 90 days, and he cannot live within a mile of the victims or within 1,000 feet of a school, public park or youth program center, among other restrictions.

Stidham's attorney, Michael Troemel, said Stidham plans to appeal his convictions.

October 26, 2012: WLFI TV

Man faces 50 to 80 years in prison for drug charges



Brittany Tyner

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A 28-year-old man has been convicted of 16 drug-related felonies and a misdemeanor.

According to court documents, in September of 2011 Chris McCaster and Nina Ricketts were pulled over on U.S. 52 and County Road 400. The Lafayette police officer noticed a strong smell of marijuana, got a warrant, and searched the car with the help of two police dogs. The dogs found crack, heroin, marijuana and ecstasy pills.

On Thursday, McCaster was found guilty of a number of felonies, including dealing cocaine and heroin to an undercover officer. McCaster could have an enhanced sentence if a judge determines he's a habitual offender. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said McCaster faces 50 to 80 years in prison.

October 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman acquitted of felony counts in Tippecanoe welfare fraud trial

A former West Lafayette woman accused of lying about her income in order to continue receiving public assistance has been found not guilty of all felony counts, a county official says.

A Tippecanoe County Superior Court 2 jury returned the verdict late Thursday, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Harrington said the jury found Katrina M. Pomart, 44, of Darlington, not guilty of two counts of theft. The jury found her guilty of one misdemeanor count of welfare fraud, a count that originally had been filed as a C Felony.

The trial got under way Tuesday. Pomart was accused of receiving public assistance for which she was not qualified because her household income was higher than reported.

The charges stem from separate investigations by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Family and Social Services Administration.

October 23, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man holds girlfriend, 5 kids at gunpoint overnight

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man who police said held his girlfriend and five children overnight at gunpoint faces eight felony charges.

Investigators said Jerwond Williams, Jr., 20, used a loaded handgun to hold the six people overnight from Oct. 14 to Oct. 15.

The woman told police that Williams let her go when she said she needed to leave for a job interview and had to take her children with her.

Detectives said during the incident, Williams hit the girlfriend in the face as well her 8-year-old son in the chest so hard it knocked the wind out of him.

The children in the house ranged in age from 8 years old to 3 months old.

After he was arrested, Williams told police the woman could have left the apartment at any time.

Williams faces eight felonies including six counts of criminal confinement.

He was in the Tippecanoe County Jail Monday night on \$25,000 bond.

October 23, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette veteran sentenced to six months of probation



Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette veteran was sentenced to six months of supervised probation.

Eric Braman was convicted in August of carrying a handgun without a license. Last year, Braman fired shots outside of Endzone Sports Bar in Lafayette. Debris ricocheted off the pavement and hit someone nearby in the shoulder. Braman was found not guilty of a felony charge of criminal recklessness.

Judge Gregory Donat sentenced Braman to a one year suspended sentence in the Department of Corrections with the first six months on supervised probation.

The judge also mandated that Braman continue his mental health treatment.

Braman is a military veteran who lost his leg in September of 2010 to a grenade in Afghanistan.

October 23, 2012: WLFI TV

Man crashes car while heavily medicated

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces criminal charges for operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

54-year-old Duane Alexander Sr. crashed his car into a parked car on North 9th Street last week. According to court documents, police officers noticed that Alexander was intoxicated.

Alexander told police he took a lot of prescription drugs for medical reasons and even admitted he was not supposed to drive when he took the medication. Alexander failed several field sobriety tests.

Along with an OWI, he was charged with operating a motor vehicle while privileges are forfeited for life, which is a felony.

October 19, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Gibson murder suspect sought to dump lawyers; trial scheduled for Nov. 13

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

First, Darren J. Englert tried to withdraw his guilty plea to murder — claiming he was not “of sound mind” when he admitted that he and two acquaintances killed 26-year-old Jeremy K. Gibson in July 2011 and concealed the body.

But that didn’t pass muster with Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams, who last month denied Englert’s request.

Then, in another motion the court received Monday, Englert filed for “dissolution of counsel,” asking that his attorneys, Earl McCoy and Chad Montgomery, be dropped from the case.

(Note: “Dissolution” typically applies to divorce proceedings; Englert filed the paperwork himself.)

Williams rejected that, too, during a court hearing Friday.

That leaves Englert still on the hook for a jury trial scheduled to begin Nov. 13.

Englert was one of three people charged with conspiracy to commit murder, murder, criminal confinement and other felonies in Gibson’s death.

He pleaded guilty to the murder count alone — admitting that he, 20-year-old Carolann R. Clear and 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams forced Gibson, a father of two toddlers, from his home on North Eighth Street to a cornfield at U.S. 231 and County Road 500 North, near Montmorenci.

Gibson was beaten to death with a pickax or shovel, and his body was buried in a shallow grave there.

Clear was Gibson's live-in girlfriend. Englert and Antonio Williams had been staying with them temporarily.

Antonio Williams died in January of lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after overdosing on methadone.

Englert, who did not have a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office when he pleaded guilty to murder, will stand trial from Nov. 13 to 16 for the remaining charges.

Clear is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 29.

October 17, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman pleads guilty to OWI crash causing death

Brittany Tyner

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A woman pleaded guilty Wednesday to operating a vehicle with a controlled substance causing death.

On June 7, Tamera Richards crashed near the 7600 block of Harrison Road. The crash sent six people to the hospital. Police said the driver in the other car, Donna Wall, was airlifted from the scene. She died later as a result of her injuries.

Richards was taken to Franciscan Saint Elizabeth East Hospital in Lafayette the night of the crash, where it was reported she had a blood alcohol level of .11 percent.

Richards also admitted Wednesday to being a habitual substance offender.

Richards will be sentenced on Dec. 10.

October 16, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man arrested for murder; Police arrive to find man shot in chest

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces a preliminary murder charge in the city's first homicide of the year. Investigators said it was a dispute about a woman that got out of hand.

Hours after the murder, police were still inside taking a closer look at the crime scene, the front room of the house at 3106 Kossuth St.

"It's nuts," said neighbor Traci Sarjent. "Just seeing it firsthand, it was just crazy."

Sarjent lives across the street from the scene and had just come inside from playing with her dogs Monday afternoon.

"We look out front and we're like, 'Oh my gosh!'" Sarjent said. "There's like 10 cop cars and guns are drawn, it was just crazy."

The 911 call of shots fired forced police to block off Kossuth Street soon after 2:15 p.m.

Police found 32-year-old Robert Rudicle II, inside, unresponsive with a single gun shot wound in the center of his chest from a shotgun blast.

They soon located the homeowner, 51-year-old Kevin Adams, in the back yard. At first he was called a person of interest before he was later arrested.

"He was a really 'to himself' guy," next door neighbor Lynn Livingston said. "I knew his wife better than him. She passed away a couple years ago."

Livingston said Adams was a good neighbor who she has known for more than 20 years.

Investigators said he had a female friend over who had earlier arranged to get a ride from Rudicle.

"When the victim showed up here, Mr. Adams didn't want her to leave," said Lt. Brad Hayworth. "They got into an argument over whether or not she was going to leave and it led to Mr. Adams shooting our victim."

When Livingston heard what investigators believe happened, she said in some ways, she wasn't incredibly surprised.

"(The circumstance) doesn't surprise me," Livingston said. "It surprises me that he actually shot somebody, (but) he was kind of possessive."

Paramedics rushed Rudicle to Franciscan St. Elizabeth East Hospital where he later died. Police said there are no signs of a struggle in the house and Rudicle didn't appear to be armed. They aren't even sure if Rudicle had ever met Adams before Monday.

But for neighbors in a normally quiet Columbian Park neighborhood, the green house just west of Earl Avenue will never be seen in quite the same way again.

"It's just a sad memory really, somebody died there," Sarjent said. "It's just sad."

Lafayette police said Rudicle was a Lafayette resident but was originally from Florida.

Adams is currently in the Tippecanoe County Jail, where he's scheduled to have his first court appearance Tuesday.

Neighbors told News 18 that Adams has two adult children, including one who lives at the Kossuth address and is mentally handicapped.

October 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Felony charges filed against Lafayette teen in infant battery case

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager claimed to have reached his breaking point and was "in a rage" when he repeatedly struck his infant son's head — causing multiple skull fractures and internal brain bleeding — because the baby would not stop crying, court documents allege.

The father, 18-year-old Brendan T. Bell, was formally charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with neglect of a dependent resulting in serious bodily injury and battery on a child resulting in serious bodily injury. Both counts are Class B felonies, punishable by six to 20 years in prison.

A condition update for his son, who is being treated at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, was not available Friday. The 22-day-old was transferred from intensive care on Tuesday, and medical staff indicated that they would update detectives only if his condition worsened, said Lt. Troy Harris, commander of the West Lafayette Police Department's criminal investigations division.

In other words, Harris said, the lack of any updates is good news.

The infant is identified in court documents by only his initials, G.C.

As of Friday afternoon, Bell remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$250,000 surety bond.

The investigation began last Sunday, when Bell's mother called police to report the boy's injuries. Police believe the injuries were inflicted Oct. 6, when Bell picked up his son from the boy's mother in West Lafayette.

Bell and the mother are not, and apparently were never, in a relationship.

Following is a summary of what investigators believe happened, according to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges and Bell's own statements to detectives:

Shortly after Bell put his son in a car seat and drove away, the boy became fussy and would not stop crying. Attempts to calm him down with a pacifier did not help.

Bell is accused of striking the right side of his son's face three to six times.

He reportedly admitted to noticing that his son's injuries became worse throughout the night — bruising developed down his face, and the boy was not eating — but Bell didn't seek help because he was "selfish," having recently been hired and "did not want to lose" his good job.

Bell further claimed to be "scared, young and inexperienced."

The boy suffered skull fractures, subdural hematomas and scalp hematomas.

October 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Felony drug charges filed against Lafayette man

A Lafayette man was charged with multiple felony drug charges Wednesday in Tippecanoe County Circuit Court.

Kevin L. Douglass, 44, was charged with dealing methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, two counts of illegal drug lab, possession of a syringe, maintaining a common nuisance, possession of paraphernalia and being a habitual substance offender.

According to court documents, police were called to 434 S. Fifth St. for a disturbance on Oct. 3.

While at the home, where Douglass was living at the time, police noticed a strong chemical odor and discovered several items associated with the creation and sell of methamphetamine.

Douglass was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail Wednesday night on a \$25,000 surety bond.

October 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Felony charges levied against West Lafayette man for dealing mushrooms, marijuana

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a West Lafayette man accused of selling psilocybin mushrooms and marijuana, some of which was sent and received via mail, court documents allege.

Timothy C. Shepperd, 21, was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with dealing a controlled substance; possession of a controlled substance; dealing in marijuana; possession of marijuana; possession of a legend drug; maintaining a common nuisance; possession of paraphernalia.

Six of the seven counts are felonies.

The charges stem from Shepperd's arrest on March 25.

That day, police received complaints of two dogs running loose in West Lafayette. One of the dogs then led officers back to his home at 1607 N. Grant St. — Shepperd's address, said Capt. Gary Sparger of the West Lafayette Police Department.

The officers smelled burnt marijuana, and Shepperd and his two roommates gave written consent to search their home, Sparger said.

According to a probable cause affidavit, drugs and paraphernalia allegedly were found in Shepperd's bedroom.

That included 475 grams of marijuana packaged for sale; 75 grams of mushrooms that contained psilocybin and psilocyn; prescription painkillers; numerous receipts for large money orders; and shipping materials.

Sparger said the evidence indicated that Shepperd had been mailing and receiving drugs.

The lead charge against him, dealing a controlled substance, is a Class B felony, punishable by six to 20 years in prison.

A published telephone number could not be found to reach Shepperd for comment.

He is the second person this month to be charged in Tippecanoe County with dealing psilocybin mushrooms.

A Purdue student, 21-year-old Samuel I. Heasley of Fort Wayne, faces a Class A felony count of dealing a controlled substance because his West Lafayette apartment — where he allegedly sold from — is within 1,000 feet of a school.

October 8, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Driver in fatal go-kart incident to plead guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is expected to plead guilty to his involvement in a bizarre incident this past summer where a friend died from head injuries after falling from a moving go-kart.

Joshua L. Cummins, 27, was charged last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 with operating a vehicle while intoxicated/endangering a person, which is a Class A misdemeanor, in the June 24 death of 33-year-old Michael R. Shidler of Lafayette.

Cummins had been scheduled to appear in court Oct. 22 for an initial hearing. But court records show that Cummins' attorney, Matt Sandy, filed paperwork Thursday indicating that Cummins plans to enter a guilty plea.

That hearing is Oct. 26.

Shortly before midnight on June 22, Cummins was behind the wheel of a two-seater go-kart that zipped through the parking lot of Wea Ridge Middle School, 4410 S. County 150 East. Shidler was standing on the back, holding onto something, the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office previously told the Journal & Courier. A third person rode alongside Cummins.

Cummins did not crash, but Shidler somehow fell off the go-kart and struck his head on the pavement. Shidler died two days later.

Police previously said that Cummins and Shidler had consumed alcoholic beverages beforehand.

October 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Purdue student accused of selling psilocybin mushrooms

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Allegations that he sold psilocybin mushrooms from his West Lafayette apartment could land a Purdue University student behind bars for a minimum of 20 to 50 years.

The student, 21-year-old Samuel I. Heasley of Fort Wayne, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with three counts of dealing a controlled substance; five counts of possession of a controlled substance; maintaining a common nuisance; and possession of marijuana.

Dealing psilocybin mushrooms is typically a Class B felony, punishable by six to 20 years in prison. But Heasley's apartment, in the 1000 block of North Salisbury Street, is within 1,000 feet of Happy Hollow Elementary School — elevating the charge to a Class A felony, which has a sentencing range of 20 to 50 years.

Heasley was initially arrested in April, when the investigation took place. He's due in court on Oct. 19 for an initial hearing on the formal charges.

A published telephone number could not be found to reach Heasley for comment. Court records do not indicate whether he has hired an attorney.

Purdue spokeswoman Jeanne Norberg said Tuesday that Heasley is enrolled this semester as a sophomore, studying building and construction management technology.

Though charges of dealing psilocybin mushrooms are rare in Tippecanoe County, use of the drug is not, particularly among students, according to Lt. Troy Harris, a detective and head of the West Lafayette Police Department's narcotics unit.

"It's not on the same scale as marijuana ... and it's not something that we see every day, but it's definitely not uncommon," Harris said.

Heasley's arrest stems from an investigation by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit last spring

According to a probable cause affidavit, a confidential informant purchased mushrooms from Heasley on three occasions in March and April. Officers got a warrant for Heasley's apartment on April 16, during which time Heasley allegedly tried to flush mushrooms down the toilet.

The mushrooms sold to the informant were tested by Indiana State Police and found to contain psilocin and psilocybin.

October 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Tippecanoe County drug charges cost Ohioan 3 years in jail

A Cincinnati man who claimed he was transporting 200 pounds of marijuana from Chicago to Cincinnati for “some Hispanics” was sentenced Tuesday to three years in prison and one year on community corrections.

The verdicts issued by Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court stemmed from a bench trial held in August.

On March 12, 2011, an Indiana State Police trooper stopped 38-year-old Duane A. Crocker on Interstate 65 for a traffic violation. Crocker consented to a search of his vehicle.

Ten packages of marijuana were found. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the street value of the drugs was between \$350,000 and \$500,000.

Crocker was found guilty of dealing marijuana over 10 pounds, a Class C felony; possession of marijuana over 30 grams, a Class D felony; and maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony.

September 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man guilty of rape, confinement in fake taxi trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

How did Jacob I. Stidham's DNA end up on the lower body of a stranger — a woman visiting Lafayette for the first time on March 5-6, 2011 — whom a sexual assault nurse examiner concluded was likely raped?

They met at a bar near Purdue University's campus that weekend, then got into the back of his vehicle for a consensual, sexual act, the Lafayette man claimed.

But jurors didn't buy Stidham's story.

On Thursday afternoon, after a three-day trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, they found Stidham guilty of rape, a Class B felony; two counts of criminal confinement, a Class C felony; public indecency, a misdemeanor; and battery, a misdemeanor.

Jurors, who deliberated about four hours, found him not guilty of attempted criminal deviate conduct, a Class B felony, and receiving stolen property, a misdemeanor.

Stidham, 32, is scheduled to be sentenced Oct. 29 by Judge Don Daniel. The rape count alone is punishable by six to 20 years in prison.

The case against him centered on allegations that Stidham picked up two women from Chauncey Hill Mall sometime after 3 a.m. on March 6, 2011. The women wrongly assumed he was a taxi driver; one of them had called for a ride to their friend's home near Indiana 26 East and Interstate 65.

The Journal & Courier typically does not publish the names of possible victims in sex-based crimes.

According to R.M.'s testimony, the driver appeared normal, at first. But she grew concerned when he turned south, rather than driving east to her friend's home. R.M. was shoved out of the vehicle on Old Romney Road, and the “taxi” took off with A.T. in the back seat, heavily impaired and passed out.

A.T.'s whereabouts were unknown for more than two hours, until she showed up at a Speedway gas station on Old U.S. 231, seeking help. The woman could not recall what took place, but she testified to her bra being unclipped and having soreness in her vagina that wasn't present the prior evening.

A sexual assault nurse examiner also testified that A.T. had numerous microscopic tears consistent with forceful, nonconsensual penetration.

The attempted sexual deviate conduct and public indecency counts — Stidham was acquitted of the attempted sexual deviate conduct — stemmed from claims by R.M. that the driver exposed and fondled himself, then tried to force her head onto his lap.

R.M. didn't tell investigators about those accusations until April 11, which one of Stidler's attorneys, Michael Troemel, repeatedly noted.

As to A.T., "There's a mountain of evidence of consent," Troemel said, referring to the woman's own photos from that night and surveillance video from Five Guys in Chauncey Hill Mall, which showed her and another man she met that night.

A.T. had testified to not remembering visiting two of three bars that her group of friends went to on March 5-6.

Stidham wasn't identified as a potential suspect until June 2011, when secretions on A.T.'s buttocks and neck returned a match to Stidham's DNA. Stidham's DNA was in the FBI's Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, after a 2008 arrest for a sex offense in California — though he was acquitted.

During the trial, Stidham denied being the driver.

But that contradicted the evidence, which included Stidham's cellphone records showing his cellphone as following the same path as the "taxi" and testimony from an acquaintance who claimed Stidham told him about picking up two women — dropping off one of them, then having sex with the other, argued Deputy Prosecutor Kevin McDaniel.

During closing arguments, McDaniel reminded jurors that Stidham had saved a newspaper article from March that first reported the incident.

"Who just keeps a newspaper article about two girls being sexually assaulted?"

September 27, 2012: WLFITV

Man found guilty of rape after posing as taxi driver



TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFITV) - A Lafayette man who posed as a taxi driver and lured two women into his vehicle is found guilty of multiple felonies, including confinement and rape.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said after a three day jury trial and more than four hours of deliberation, Jacob Stidham, 32, was convicted of rape, two counts of confinement, public indecency, and battery.

Harrington said in March 2011, two women in the Chauncey Hill parking lot got into Stidham's car thinking it was a taxi. One passed out in the back seat. Stidham exposed himself to the other woman and asked her to perform oral sex.

When she called 911, he pushed her out of the car and drove off with the other woman still in the back seat. That woman made contact with family members at a gas station about two hours later. She told officers her bra had been unclipped, but she was not sure what happened. She was also missing her camera, keys, and wallet.

A hospital examination found injuries consistent with rape and Harrington says DNA was traced to Stidham.

Officers later found several of the stolen items at his apartment.

Harrington said Stidham faces six to 29 1/2 years in prison. Sentencing is set for October 29.

September 25 2012: WLFITV

Habitual traffic violator gets 6+ years



Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - 32-year-old Michael Sykes of Lafayette will spend 6 and 1/2 years in prison after driving drunk without a license, then hiding from police earlier this year.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Sykes pleaded guilty to being a habitual traffic violator and a habitual substance offender, and operating while intoxicated with a prior OWI conviction.

As News 18 first reported in January, police tried to pull Sykes over for driving erratically, but Sykes kept driving until he crashed his car, and then ran away. Officers found Sykes in some nearby bushes.

His blood alcohol content was tested at .27, more than three times the legal limit.

In addition to the prison time, Sykes will have three years of supervised probation.

September 24, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man charged in drive-by shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a Lafayette man accused of firing multiple gunshots into a vehicle occupied by a family, including four children ages 5 and under, in May and fleeing the scene.

Pedro Holguin Jr., 32, was charged last week in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with two counts of criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon. Both counts are felonies.

Holguin was booked into the Tippecanoe County Jail late Sunday, where he remained Monday afternoon on a \$10,000 surety bond.

The drive-by shooting occurred about midnight on May 17 near Ingram Court and Hendrickson Lane, off Old Romney Road on Lafayette's south side. The victims — a Lafayette man, his wife and their four children — were not injured, though multiple bullets struck their vehicle.

The father is an acquaintance of Holguin's, said Detective Mike Humphrey of the Lafayette Police Department.

Though he was contacted after the shooting, Holguin wasn't confirmed as a suspect until July, when a co-defendant pleaded guilty and implicated his friend.

According to a probable cause affidavit, the family was in the neighborhood on May 17 to look at a home that they considered buying on nearby Plantation Way. While there, a red Ford Focus came swerving toward them.

The father, who was at the wheel, thought the driver was intoxicated and pulled out of the way. But the Focus then turned around and began following the family.

When the father stopped to find out what was going on, the Focus' passenger began shooting.

Because the family got the Focus' license plate, Lafayette police were able to track down the driver, 24-year-old Andrew "Andy" Akers of Lafayette, who lives on Hendrickson Lane. Akers' father allowed officers to search his property, and a 9 mm rifle was found in some bushes. Its cartridges matched 9 mm shell casings found at the scene of the shooting and in Akers' car.

Detectives got the nickname "P.J." from Akers' girlfriend, which led them to Holguin. However, both Akers and Holguin declined to speak with investigators.

During his guilty plea in July to obstruction of justice, Akers admitted that he and Holguin had been drinking and driving around when they spotted the victims' car driving slowly through the neighborhood.

Akers later fingered Holguin as the shooter.

September 18, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Sex offender fails to register

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

For the third time in five years, a convicted child molester from Tippecanoe County is accused of failing to provide law enforcement with updated information on his whereabouts for Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry.

Ronald G. Reid Jr., 44, who is homeless, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with failing to register as a convicted sex offender and failure to register while having a prior conviction. Both counts are felonies.

He's also charged with being a habitual offender, which is a sentencing enhancement.

Police cannot locate Reid, and it's unknown whether he still lives in the Lafayette area, according to Detective Jason Morgan of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office, who oversees Tippecanoe County's portion of Indiana's registry.

In 1996, Reid pleaded guilty to molesting two children under 12 and was sentenced to seven years in prison. The conviction also required that he be on Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry for life. He was sent back to prison in 2007 and again in 2009 for not registering.

Indiana law typically requires convicted sex offenders to register once a year in person. But homeless offenders must do so every seven days until they find a permanent address.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges against Reid, he registered as required in November 2011, after his release from prison for the 2009 conviction. Reid continued registering weekly until February but hasn't since then.

A check of the National Sex Offender Public Registry did not show Reid as registering in another jurisdiction.

September 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man charged in drive-by shooting

— Justin L. Mack/jmack@jconline.com

Criminal charges were filed Tuesday against a West Lafayette man accused of child abuse and domestic battery.

Devaughn Yarbrough, 39, was charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court with battery on a child, strangulation and domestic battery committed in the physical presence of a child less than 16 years of age.

All of the offenses are Class D felonies.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the incident that led to the criminal charges took place on Sept. 6 around 10:35 p.m.

West Lafayette Police were called to Yarbrough's home on Soldiers Home Road. Upon arrival, Yarbrough's wife told police that he had pinned her to the bed, choked her and struck her.

The victim's 13-year-old son came to her defense, and Yarbrough then began choking him as well, court documents allege.

After the incident, police observed blood and wounds on both victims.

While speaking to Yarbrough, the investigating officer noticed that his speech was slurred, his eyes were bloodshot and he smelled of alcohol.

As of Tuesday night, Yarbrough was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$5,000 surety bond. He was first taken into custody on Sept. 7.

September 10, 2012: WLFITV

Man charged after alleged sexual incidents 6 years apart

Dan Klein

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man faces multiple charges of child molesting and sexual misconduct after alleged incidents almost six years apart.

Michael Houser, 48, faces four counts of child molesting from 2006 when investigators said he put his hand down the pants of a girl and had her touch him inappropriately.

He also faces two counts of sexual misconduct with a minor from incidents that detectives said happened in early 2012.

Criminal charges were filed Monday against a West Lafayette man accused of sexually molesting an underage girl.

September 10, 2012: WLFITV

Juvenile charged as adult in theft, burglary cases

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Gabriel Ruiz, 17, of Lafayette faces seven felony charges including residential entry, theft, and burglary.

Court documents reveal Ruiz was arrested several times between mid-July and early August. Investigators said on separate occasions he stole from two area businesses, broke into a home and stole items, and also stole a car.

He was waived to the adult criminal court system from the juvenile on September 7. As of Monday, he remains in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

September 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

West Lafayette man charged with molesting underage girl

Written by Justin Mack

Michael D. Houser, 48, was charged in Tippecanoe County Circuit Court with one count of sexual misconduct with a minor, a Class B felony; one count of sexual misconduct with a minor, a Class C felony; and four counts of child molesting, Class C felonies, for offenses dating back to March 2006.

A warrant for Houser's arrest was issued Monday. Jail officials said Monday night that Houser had not yet been arrested, and he was last in custody in July 2006.

Attempts to reach Houser for comment Monday were unsuccessful.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Houser's first offense took place a few days before March 29, 2006, which is the date an 8-year-old old girl told her mother that Houser had been touching her "down there" while the family was watching a movie at home.

The mother contacted Houser about the incident. After initially denying it, Houser admitting to "patting" the girl's vagina while watching a movie.

In a number of police interviews conducted in early April 2006, Houser told police several versions of the story, stating each time that the 8-year-old initiated the sexual contact and that he attempted to stop her.

In late February 2012, the now 14-year-old victim told police that Houser had touched her breasts and vagina, asked her for naked photographs, masturbated in front of her and tried to have sex with her at least twice in 2012.

Houser then told the victim to promise to not tell anyone about the incidents.

It was unclear if any incidents took place between March 2006 and early 2012 or if any incidents were reported after February 2012.

September 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former Purdue football player Collins faces criminal charges for battery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against an ousted Purdue University football player accused of hitting a woman in the face outside a West Lafayette bar this summer.

On July 14, Sean P. Collins was arrested on suspicion of battery resulting in serious bodily injury, which would have been a Class C felony had Collins been charged with that offense.

Instead, 21-year-old Collins was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 with battery resulting in bodily injury, a misdemeanor. He also was charged with misdemeanor counts of resisting law enforcement and public intoxication.

Collins is scheduled for an initial hearing before Judge Les Meade on Sept. 24.

The incident took place about 1 a.m. outside Where Else? bar, 304 W. State St., in West Lafayette's Village.

The victim, 22-year-old Holly Fullerton of Monticello, told investigators that she and a group of friends were standing outside Where Else? when Collins approached them, allegedly trying to pick a fight.

After Fullerton tried to intervene, he allegedly grabbed her arm and hit her cheek with his fist.

Fullerton was treated at a Lafayette hospital and released the same day.

Collins was dismissed from Purdue's football team on July 15. He joined the Boilermakers in 2009 as a walk-on and was on the roster in 2010 and 2011.

September 7, 2012: WLFITV

Man charged in Lafayette burglary

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A Lafayette man is accused of stealing items from an apartment while two women barricaded themselves in the bathroom.

Lafayette police said Clifton Thompson, Jr., 31, broke into an apartment on Columbia Street Sunday evening while a female resident and a friend were in the bathroom. According to court documents, Thompson walked into the bathroom and said he wanted to have sex with them. The women were able to push him out and hold the door shut.

A neighbor called 911 when she heard one of the women screaming for police. Officers said they arrived as Thompson was stealing items from the bedroom.

Thompson told them he had been drinking that day and could not remember what happened.

He faces four felony charges including burglary and residential entry.

August 31, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

June arrests on Indiana 25 linked to recent statewide raid, wider conspiracy A connection to recent statewide raid

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

On June 27, a routine traffic stop for a vehicle speeding on Indiana 25 North ended with police arresting the driver and her front-seat passenger — two Tippecanoe County women, one of whom allegedly concealed methamphetamine in a body cavity.

As the officer approached, the passenger, 31-year-old Amber L. Rice of Lafayette, reportedly shoved a small plastic bag containing 50 grams of meth into a glass pipe hidden in her vagina.

Both Rice and the driver, 31-year-old Haley J. Brooks-Miller of West Point, have since been charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with various meth-related offenses.

And it turns out that the incident was part of a larger criminal conspiracy, court documents reveal — one that resulted in federal indictments against 40 people and a statewide FBI raid on Aug. 22, including in Lafayette.

Two people, Rice and 31-year-old Michael T. Foley, of Chesterton, were arrested in Lafayette that day.

The 40 defendants include two Indiana Department of Correction inmates accused of using smuggled cellphones to run a large-scale meth and heroin distribution ring.

One of the inmates, 28-year-old Justin M. Addler, is serving time for a 2005 conviction out of Tippecanoe County for dealing cocaine and carrying a handgun without a license.

According to the indictment, on or about June 27, Addler spoke with Foley several times that day about a trip to Elkhart that Addler arranged for Foley, Rice and Brooks-Miller, reportedly to purchase a large amount of meth.

In one of the conversations, Foley allegedly described that the meth came in one bag, but the trio was separating the stash into small bags.

The indictment goes on to state that Brooks-Miller and Rice were in possession of 109.1 grams of a a meth mixture, of which 90 grams was pure meth, on or about June 27.

No mention is made of the traffic stop, but details from the Tippecanoe County case and the federal indictment match.

Foley was riding in the backseat of Brooks-Miller's vehicle that evening, but he was not arrested.

Rice has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since June 27 and remained there as of Friday night on local charges. Her court-appointed attorney, Robert Little, told the Journal & Courier that he was aware of the federal investigation and trying to learn more about Rice's alleged role.

Little said he was informally told that a federal, no-bond warrant was issued against her.

Foley remained in federal custody Friday.

Brooks-Miller had been in federal custody, but court records show that paperwork was filed Aug. 28 ordering her release, so long as she abides by a host of conditions.

August 29, 2012: WLFITV

Police: Man stole \$25 from Habitat for Humanity office

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A Lafayette man is accused of breaking into the Habitat for Humanity office and stealing \$25.

In the early morning hours of August 21, LPD officers were called to the office on the 400 block of South 1st Street when neighbors thought they saw people go in the front door.

According to court documents, police found a ransacked desk and there appeared to be a computer missing.

Police said they found 18-year-old Dakota Fields and a juvenile when they left the building.

Habitat for Humanity employees said \$25 was missing from a bank bag.

Fields faces charges of Burglary and Theft and was in the Tippecanoe County Jail on \$10,000 bond Tuesday evening.

August 27, 2012: WLFITV

Verdict split for Lafayette veteran

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WFLI) - A Lafayette- veteran who fired gun shots outside the EndZone Sports Bar in Lafayette last August is found not guilty of a felony charge of criminal recklessness.

However, the verdict for 24-year-old Eric Braman was split.

The jury found him guilty of a misdemeanor charge of "carrying a handgun without a license".

In May, a judge rejected a plea agreement that dropped the felony charge to a misdemeanor.

Sentencing is set for September 27.

August 25, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Afghan war veteran Eric Braman acquitted of felony charge, guilty of misdemeanor

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

For nearly a full year, Eric S. Braman said he had no nightmares or dreams about the four months he served in Afghanistan in 2010 — a tour of duty that ended early when the U.S. Army specialist lost his lower right leg on Aug. 28 in a rocket-propelled grenade attack.

Then came Aug. 27, 2011, when Braman got into a heated confrontation with another man outside a Lafayette bar and a small crowd gathered around them. Something snapped, and he fired two gunshots — one into the air, the other into the ground — and slightly injured a passer-by.

"Everyone started walking toward me. Then it was like ... flashback," Braman told Lafayette police investigators in a recorded statement. "I'm going to run until I can't run anymore."

A Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 jury was likely sympathetic to his plight.

On Friday afternoon, following a two-day trial, jurors acquitted Braman of the most serious charge he faced: criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class D felony.

They found him guilty only of carrying a handgun without a license, a Class A misdemeanor.

Braman, 23, of Lafayette, is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 27 by Judge Les Meade. He faces up to one year incarceration.

"We would like to thank the jury for their service. We feel the verdict was fair given the law and the facts," Braman's attorney, Dan Moore, said. "Eric looks forward to putting this behind him and moving forward in a positive direction."

The verdicts turned out to be a better deal than the plea agreement offered by the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, which reduced the criminal recklessness count to a Class A misdemeanor and dropped the other charge.

But in May, Meade rejected the plea agreement, partly on grounds that he believed it minimized the seriousness of what took place. The victim, 31-year-Andrew Studer of Lafayette, was knocked to the ground after being struck by gun wadding and debris from the rounds in Braman's "The Judge" revolver.

Moore filed for change of venue and judge, but Meade denied that.

The shooting occurred about 3:30 a.m. outside End Zone Sports Bar & Grill at 2408 Veterans Memorial Parkway South, following an evening of barhopping and heavy drinking by Braman, his brother, his girlfriend and other friends.

On Aug. 26 and 27, the group went to four Lafayette bars — first the Biltmore Tap Room, then Checkerboard. They stopped briefly at Jerilee's Pub before reaching End Zone shortly before last call.

Braman told investigators that he and his girlfriend were chatting outside End Zone when he noticed a man he did not know staring at him.

“ ‘You all right, dude? You got a staring problem. You're eyeballing the (expletive) out of me. Either that, or you're blind,’ ” Braman recalled saying.*

Braman told the man that he had a handgun on him and claimed that the man egged him on — prompting Braman to pull out his revolver.

He further claimed to believing that the crowd around them was made up of Afghanis, more specifically eight of them walking toward him.

“ ‘Back off!’ ” Braman recalled saying. Then, “Pop! Pop!”

He ran toward a nearby neighborhood and crashed in a stranger's yard. It wasn't until morning that Braman spoke to his girlfriend and he learned other details of what happened.

The incident occurred the day of a fundraising fish fry and one day before a community parade to honor Braman's military service. The fish fry went on, but organizers canceled the parade.

Braman's military service and injury played a key role in his trial.

Jurors heard Braman himself describe the attack, which killed his friend and fellow troop member, along with the head of another military unit that was replacing Braman's.

On Aug. 28, 2010, Braman and his friend took that man on a tour of the area they were assigned to in Nangarhar, Afghanistan. It was daylight.

Braman said three rocket-propelled grenades struck their truck. He described something stabbing his chest, shattering his shin and taking out his foot.

He then looked over and saw his friend bleeding heavily.

Braman said he realized his friend had died after the six doctors helping his friend stopped suddenly and walked over to treat Braman.

August 23, 2012: WLFTV

Lafayette man sentenced to 45 years in prison for 2011 murder of Clarence Smith

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A Lafayette man has been sentenced to 45 years in prison for his part in a 2011 murder in Lafayette.

23-year-old Kevin Williams was found guilty of helping murder 26-year-old Clarence Smith last July. Earlier this year, a jury found Williams guilty of murder, robbery, and conspiracy to commit robbery.

He was sentenced Wednesday to 45 years in the Indiana Department of Corrections and five years of supervised probation.

He's one of three people convicted in Smith's murder. According to court documents, Williams was the getaway driver while 22-year-old Michael Anthony Foster and 24-year-old Dartanyan Porche planned to rob Smith during a gun deal. When Clarence didn't cooperate, he was shot and killed.

August 22, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

3rd man sentenced for role in deadly Lafayette robbery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

On March 8, 2008, Kevin K. Williams was the getaway driver for three acquaintances who held up a Lafayette fast-food restaurant and a gas station, where they pistol-whipped an employee.

The employee got away with minor injuries.

Williams was again the getaway driver on July 28, 2011, when he and two friends conspired to rob an acquaintance, 24-year-old Clarence W. "Baybay" Smith Jr., by setting up a fake gun sale.

This time around, the robbery turned deadly. Smith, of Lafayette, was fatally shot in the abdomen after refusing to comply with their demands.

Though Williams was not physically present at the robberies, his role as getaway driver made him equally culpable. As such, Williams should have known better, Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 told him Wednesday.

He sentenced Williams to 45 years in prison, followed by five years on probation, for Smith's murder.

"I would have expected you could have figured out that you have responsibility in that situation," Busch said. "If somebody else has a gun, you don't have control of it.

"It's clear to me, the three of you did not plan to go out and kill somebody. ... But you're responsible for what they did, and what they did is kill somebody."

This past June, a Superior Court 2 jury found 22-year-old Williams, of Lafayette, guilty of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

One co-defendant, 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche of West Lafayette, was convicted of the same charges in April. The third co-defendant and triggerman, 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster of Lafayette, pleaded guilty to murder and admitted to shooting Smith after he would not hand over money.

Busch sentenced both Porche and Foster to 50 years in prison, followed by five years on probation. Williams' lesser punishment was due, in part, to his smaller role as getaway driver, the judge said.

Foster, whose plea agreement required that he testify against his friends, was a key witness for the state. He told jurors that the trio lured Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail, where Smith was killed, with intentions of robbing him.

Prosecutors had to prove the men planned the robbery beforehand to meet Indiana's definition for felony murder, which is when someone dies during the commission of another felony crime.

Williams did not testify during his own trial. But during Wednesday's hearing, he read a statement to the court and reiterated that he did not know Foster's intentions. Williams said he has remained in a daze at the Tippecanoe County Jail, trying to understand what happened.

"Never in my wildest dreams — never would I put myself in this dilemma," Williams said.

He apologized to Smith's family and friends, who did not attend the hearing, and to the Lafayette community.

"I'm truly sorry for the family of Clarence Smith," Williams said.

His mother, Anita Dunigan, testified that she moved Williams and a younger sibling to Lafayette when Williams was 12 years old. He helped her care for the sibling, who had Huntington's disease, a degenerative brain disease.

When the sibling died seven months later, it devastated Williams, she said. That, coupled with information that his father had been incarcerated, resulted in Williams acting out and befriending an unsavory crowd, she said.

"This has had a deep impact on me, knowing my child would never take another human's life," Dunigan said. "Also, he had no reason to go out and commit a robbery."

August 20, 2012: WLFITV

Two charged for meth materials near schools

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A Tippecanoe County couple was charged with possessing materials used to make meth.

According to the Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office, around August 13 or 14, 44-year-old Charla Denise Smirl and 48-year-old Johnathon Fitzgerald Staley were found with two or more items with the intent to manufacture methamphetamine and maintaining a common nuisance.

Officers say shortly after midnight August 14, they responded to a report of a loud bang and a fire at 506 N. 11th Street in Lafayette.

They say they noticed a strong chemical odor coming from the home.

During a search, officers found syringes, paraphernalia and items for cooking meth.

The residence was within 1,000 feet of several schools, including St. James School, St. Boniface School and Washington School.

August 16, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Zaragoza gets 120-year murder sentence

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

When first arrested on April 18, 2010, Edward C. Zaragoza was adamant that he was not involved in a scheme to rob Lafayette marijuana dealer Kory D. Rogers — let alone being responsible for Rogers' shooting death 10 days prior, on April 8.

Zaragoza, 32, stuck with that story during his sentencing Thursday morning as he offered his condolences to Rogers' family.

"First, I am sorry for the family's loss. I can't understand what they're going through. No one can, unless they've been through something like that before," he said.

And on his alleged involvement? "I didn't kill their son. I passed two polygraphs. ... I didn't kill him."

But that wasn't enough to spare Zaragoza from a 120-year sentence — all in the Indiana Department of Correction — handed down by Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams.

Last month, a Superior Court 1 jury found Zaragoza guilty of all 10 counts he faced in Rogers' death, including felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon.

Williams then found Zaragoza guilty of being a habitual offender, which is a sentencing enhancement, because of unrelated convictions for burglary in 1997 and theft and receiving stolen property in 2004.

The 120-year sentence was recommended by both Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington and the Tippecanoe County probation department. Harrington argued that Zaragoza threatened witnesses who testified against him and sent letters to his mother, encouraging her to lie.

When asked by a probation officer what he thought of the convictions, Zaragoza replied, "I think it's (expletive)," according to Harrington. And when asked if he was remorseful, Zaragoza said, "I sleep just fine at night."

Those details were included in a pre-sentence investigation for the court.

Zaragoza's court-appointed attorney, Robert Little, argued for a sentence between 75 and 95 years.

He said jurors' verdicts still offered no explanation of Zaragoza's involvement in Rogers' death or whether it was Zaragoza or his co-defendant, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, who shot Rogers.

"Multiple theories were presented at trial," Little said. "Whether it was accomplice liability or felony murder, the verdicts don't tell us."

In January 2011, a Tippecanoe Circuit Court grand jury indicted Zaragoza and his wife's cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, for Rogers' death. That was based on allegations that Zaragoza and Thompson initially intended to rob Rogers of a large sum of cash and marijuana that Rogers, a marijuana dealer, stole from his supplier.

An unloaded shotgun was found near Rogers' body the day he died, leading investigators to believe that Rogers heard someone breaking into his home and approached the suspect or suspects while holding the shotgun.

Rogers died from a single gunshot wound to his chest.

The firearm used to kill him, believed to be a .40-caliber Smith & Wesson, has not been recovered.

Though no one saw Zaragoza or Thompson near Rogers' home at 2200 Ottawa Drive, prosecutors relied on cellphone technology to convey that Zaragoza — or, at minimum, his cellphone — was near Rogers' neighborhood on April 8, 2010.

Zaragoza is planning to appeal.

Thompson stood trial this past week for similar charges, but jurors in his case could not reach a unanimous verdict. Another trial will be scheduled.

August 16, 2012: WLFI TV

Zaragoza sentenced to 120 years for murdering a Lafayette man



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A man found guilty of murdering a Lafayette man is sentenced to more than 100 years behind bars.

Thursday morning, Edward Zaragoza was sentenced to 120 years in prison for the murder of Kory Rogers in July 2010.

In July, Zaragoza was found guilty of all his charges, including murder, conspiracy to commit robbery, and several others.

During the second phase of the trial, the jury also found Zaragoza guilty of possession of a firearm by a violent felon.

During phase three of Zaragoza's trial, the court found him guilty of theft in Benton County in 2003, guilty of receiving stolen property back in 1997 in Hendricks County and burglary in Tippecanoe County that same year.

August 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Father charged for shooting at kids with BB gun

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of shoving his 7-year-old daughter with a BB gun, shooting his 3-year-old son in the buttocks with a BB gun and shooting at both of them with a BB gun after they ran and hid in a closet.

The father, 28-year-old Justin A. Adams, was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with battery resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class D felony. He was being held Tuesday afternoon in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$5,000 surety bond.

"The girl said he was mad, angry," said Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department. "He indicated that he was just playing around.

"But the kids' injuries and what girl said happened matches the evidence."

Galloway said both children had bruises but did not require medical treatment.

Police believe the incident occurred sometime between Aug. 5 and 10. It wasn't reported until Aug. 12, when the children's grandmother noticed the girl's bruise.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the 7-year-old told investigators that Adams allegedly became angry when she went into a bedroom while he was busy.

She said her father grabbed a BB gun and shoved it into her abdomen, which pushed her into the corner of a closet. Her bruise appeared consistent with the shape of a muzzle.

The girl further told investigators that Adams ran after her younger brother and shot him in the buttocks. She said they hid in a closet, and her father allegedly shot multiple times into the closet door.

When interviewed by detectives, the children's mom told them she was aware of the incident. Officers searched the family's home and found an airsoft gun behind a couch. Indentations on a closet door matched the children's claims.

Galloway said another sibling in the home, a 2-year-old girl, was not involved in the incident.

August 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

No verdict in murder trial Jury can't agree on man's role in Kory Rogers' death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Jeremiah Thompson will have to stand trial a second time for allegations that he participated in a robbery plot that ended in the shooting death of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers during a break-in at Rogers' south Lafayette home two years ago.

That's because a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury, which began hearing testimony against Thompson on Aug. 8 for charges that included felony murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and attempted theft, could not agree on verdicts Tuesday following hours of deliberation — resulting in a hung jury.

Attorneys will meet Aug. 24 to schedule another trial date for 28-year-old Thompson, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Thompson's alleged link to the crime is his cousin's husband, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Mooresville, who was convicted last month of all 10 felonies against him: felony murder, murder, and being a serious violent felon in possession of a handgun, among others.

In that respect, convicting Thompson meant prosecutors had to persuade another jury that Zaragoza was guilty, too.

Rogers, a marijuana dealer, was fatally shot in the chest on April 8, 2010, in the basement apartment of his sister's house at 2200 Ottawa Drive.

The case itself began in mid-March, when Rogers stole a large sum of cash and marijuana from his supplier. Prosecutors argued that two of Rogers' acquaintances, Clint Laxton and Wes Coffey, plotted with Zaragoza to then steal from Rogers.

Zaragoza did not know Rogers but was good friends with Coffey.

According to trial testimony, investigators believe that Laxton and Zaragoza planned to break into Rogers' home on April 5, 2010, but Laxton got cold feet.

Based on other evidence — recorded Tippecanoe County Jail phone calls between Zaragoza and his wife, during which he mentioned Thompson by name, and information from a friend of Zaragoza's, who was asked to accompany him to Lafayette on or before April 8, 2010 — Thompson became a suspect.

No one could remember seeing Zaragoza or Thompson in Tippecanoe County on April 7 or April 8, 2010. But investigators caught a break after finding a receipt for the Economy Inn.

Though an Economy Inn employee could not identify Zaragoza, Zaragoza signed in using his real name. The employee, however, could only remember there being two men and did not remember Thompson himself.

Thompson, who was represented by Indianapolis attorney John Commons, will be tried on the same charges.

Charges against both men were filed in January 2011, following a grand jury investigation..

August 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury expected to get Thompson murder case Tuesday

Jurors are expected to begin deliberating Tuesday in the trial for the second suspect accused of participating in a robbery plot that ended in the fatal shooting of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers on April 8, 2010.

Attorneys finished presenting witnesses Monday.

Closing arguments are scheduled for Tuesday morning.

In January 2011, a Tippecanoe County grand jury indicted Jeremiah Thompson, 29, of Reelsville, and his cousin's husband, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Mooresville, in Rogers' death — leading to charges of felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and several other felonies.

Rogers' was a marijuana dealer.

Zaragoza's trial, held in July, ended with 10 guilty verdicts.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Thursday, and he faces a minimum range of 75 to 95 years in prison.

Thompson's trial has been under way since Aug. 7 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

If convicted of the lead count, felony murder, he faces 45 to 65 years in prison.

August 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder trial will resume on Monday

The trial for the second suspect accused of participating in a robbery plot that ended in the fatal shooting of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers on April 8, 2010, picks up again Monday.

In January 2011, a Tippecanoe County grand jury indicted Jeremiah Thompson, 29, of Reelsville, and his cousin's husband, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Mooresville, in Rogers' death — leading to charges of felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and several other felonies.

Rogers was a marijuana dealer.

Zaragoza's trial, held in July, ended with 10 guilty verdicts. He is scheduled to be sentenced Thursday.

Thompson's trial has been taking place since Aug. 7 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. It's expected to conclude by Wednesday.

August 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Meth dealer faces up to 80 years in prison



A Lafayette man faces a minimum range of 50 to 80 years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday of dealing methamphetamine and nine other charges related to his arrest last September.

Michael D. Toney, 34, stood trial Tuesday and Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Jurors found him guilty of dealing in meth, a Class A felony; possession of meth, a Class B felony; two counts of maintaining an illegal drug lab, both Class C felonies; two counts of being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm, both Class B felonies; two counts of possession of a controlled substance, both Class C felonies; and possession of paraphernalia, a misdemeanor.

Toney also was found guilty of being a habitual offender, which is a sentencing enhancement that could add 30 years in prison.

Jurors acquitted him of dealing in a sawed-off shotgun, a Class D felony, and a third count of possession of a controlled substance, a Class C felony.

Toney was arrested on Sept. 28, 2011, after Lafayette police were trying to serve unrelated arrest warrants on him from White and Pulaski counties. Officers went to an apartment where Toney was staying on South 18th Street.

According to court documents, officers did a "protective sweep" of the apartment after noticing a strong chemical odor. During the search, they found contraband, glass jars and a pitcher that contained an active "one pot" meth lab.

The firearms charge stems from a sawed-off shotgun found between mattresses in a bedroom.

Toney is scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 31.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said the state will argue that Toney's habitual offender conviction be applied to the lead charge, dealing meth as a Class A felony. That count alone is punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison; Indiana law requires that habitual enhancements be served consecutive to the underlying counts.

August 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

At Thompson murder trial, prosecutors count on 3 witnesses

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Through Wednesday, a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury is expected to hear evidence on how a Reelsville man with no direct connection to Lafayette became a suspect in the April 8, 2010, shooting death of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers.

Jeremiah Thompson's alleged link to the crime is his cousin's husband, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Mooresville, a former Tippecanoe County resident whose mother still resides here.

Together, 29-year-old Thompson and Zaragoza are accused of carrying out an attempted robbery at Rogers' home near Jefferson High School.

Prosecutors are arguing that the plot soured when Rogers approached them with an unloaded shotgun, and one of them reacted by shooting Rogers in the chest.

Rogers was a marijuana dealer who had recently acquired a large sum of cash and marijuana that he stole in March 2010 from his supplier.

The prosecutors' case relies on a string of witnesses acquainted with Rogers, Zaragoza or Thompson.

Following is a look at the key players who have or will testify for the state, according to court documents and testimony from Zaragoza's trial last month.

Zaragoza was convicted of nearly a dozen felonies, including murder. Thompson, whose trial began Tuesday with jury selection, faces similar charges.

Jordan Wilson: Rogers' best friend. He was supposed to accompany Rogers to steal the cash and marijuana, but Rogers instead took his girlfriend. Wilson then told another friend, Clint Laxton, about Rogers' score.

Laxton: Shortly after Rogers' body was found on April 8, Laxton showed up outside the home.

He told Lafayette police a tall tale about overhearing plans by a man named "Kilo" to rob Rogers. Laxton eventually admitted that was a lie.

He confessed to plotting with Zaragoza and a third man, Wesley Coffey, to break into Rogers' house on April 5, 2010. Laxton reportedly got cold feet and did not show up to meet Zaragoza.

Coffey: A former Tippecanoe County resident who moved to Avondale, Ariz., a suburb of Phoenix. He was good friends with Laxton and Zaragoza and an acquaintance of Rogers'.

He has backed up some details of Laxton's story.

Coffey has previously testified to connecting Laxton and Zaragoza, who did not know each other beforehand.

August 8, 2012: WLFI TV

Thompson murder trial begins



Jamie Jackson

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Opening statements get underway Wednesday in the trial for a man accused in a Lafayette murder.

29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson faces robbery, murder, and several other charges in relation to the April 2010 shooting and murder of 21-year-old Kory Rogers.

Jury selection took place Tuesday.

Several weeks ago Edward Zaragoza was found guilty for his involvement in the case.

Thompson was indicted for murder, robbery, theft and several other charges in January 2011, by a Tippecanoe County Grand Jury.

Kory Rogers' murder was the first in Lafayette since 2008.

August 8, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial for second killing suspect begins

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Tippecanoe County prosecutors are again outlining their theory of what led to the death of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers, a Lafayette man who was shot in the chest during a break-in at his home near Jefferson High School two years ago.

This time, the defendant is 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville. Charges against him include felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and attempted theft.

Testimony began Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

Thompson's co-defendant is his cousin's husband, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Mooresville.

Zaragoza stood trial in July and was convicted of all counts.

Neither defendant knew Rogers, an Ivy Tech Community College student whose income came from dealing high-quality marijuana, according to trial testimony.

Thompson and Zaragoza became suspects after investigators learned there was discussion among Rogers' acquaintances about taking a large sum of cash and marijuana that Rogers stole from his supplier sometime in March 2010.

Rogers was killed on April 8, 2010.

Pathologist Dr. Allen Griggs, who completed Rogers' autopsy, was among witnesses who testified Wednesday.

Griggs said Rogers was shot from an "indeterminate" range, or at least 2 to 2½ feet. The bullet, believed to be a .40-caliber round, penetrated Rogers' heart and lungs.

"It was a devastating wound," Griggs told jurors. "Most people would drop immediately."

Prosecutors believe Rogers was shot while standing in a doorway in his garage that leads to a basement apartment. Evidence at the scene indicated that he walked backward a few steps before collapsing.

A shotgun that Rogers typically kept by his bed was found near his body. It was unloaded, according to testimony from Detective Paul Huff, the Lafayette Police Department's head crime scene technician.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich are presenting the case for the state.

Thompson is represented by Indianapolis attorney John Commons, who is taking a less aggressive approach — essentially, how can a defendant convince jurors that he's innocent — than defense attorneys for Zaragoza.

Zaragoza's attorneys argued that the state's evidence was weak and relied on "jailhouse snitches."

The trial is expected to run through Aug. 15, the day before Zaragoza's sentencing hearing.

Jury seated for second murder trial in Kory Rogers' death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Opening statements are expected to take place this morning for the second suspect accused of killing 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers of Lafayette during a break-in at his home near Jefferson High School two years ago.

Jeremiah Thompson, 29, of Reelsville, is charged with felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and six other felonies in Rogers' April 8, 2010, shooting death.

Jury selection took place Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

Thompson's co-defendant, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza, of Mooresville, stood trial last month on similar charges. Zaragoza was found guilty of all counts and faces a minimum range of 75 to 95 years in prison when he's sentenced Aug. 16 by Judge Randy Williams.

Prosecutors allege that Thompson and Zaragoza conspired to break into Rogers' home to take a large amount of marijuana and cash that Rogers, a marijuana dealer, had stolen from his supplier in March 2010.

Thompson is a cousin of Zaragoza's wife.

Neither Thompson nor Zaragoza knew Rogers, according to testimony and evidence presented during Zaragoza's trial. They reportedly learned about Rogers' haul through a string of acquaintances.

Investigators believe that Rogers woke up to suspicious noises in his garage and approached the suspects with a shotgun he kept near his bed. The shotgun was not loaded.

Thompson's trial is expected to last more than a week.

Rogers died from a single gunshot wound that penetrated his heart.

August 3, 2012: WLFI TV

West Lafayette man accused of dealing synthetic pot



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Charges have been filed against a West Lafayette man accused of dealing synthetic marijuana.

26-year-old Juan Madriz has been charged with five felonies, including possession of methamphetamine, dealing in a synthetic cannabinoid and maintaining a common nuisance.

According to court documents, a Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Lieutenant was searching Madriz's apartment for a suspect from another investigation.

During the search, the lieutenant found meth, scales, and synthetic marijuana commonly referred to as "Spice".

Madriz admitted he did not sell meth but did sell Spice.

August 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

West Lafayette man charged with dealing spice

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Criminal charges have been filed against a West Lafayette man accused of dealing the once-legal synthetic drug known as spice, K2 and fake marijuana.

Juan L. Madriz, 26, was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with dealing in a synthetic cannabinoid, a Class D felony; possession of a synthetic cannabinoid, a Class D felony; possession of methamphetamine, a Class B felony; maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony; and possession of paraphernalia, a misdemeanor.

A "bulk amount" of spice was found in Madriz's apartment on Thursday, said Lt. Jason Huber of the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office. Madriz allegedly confessed to dealing but would not say whether he made it himself or bought it elsewhere, Huber said.

Spice is an herbal mixture coated with a synthetic chemical that mimics marijuana's high — but with stronger side effects — when smoked. It was marketed as incense or potpourri and sold at head shops, tobacco stores and gas stations.

In 2011, Indiana legislators passed a bill that banned the distribution and possession of synthetic drugs that contained chemical compounds commonly used to create spice and another designer drug, known as bath salts. Manufacturers, however, found a loophole by slightly altering the ingredients, and a tougher version of the bill was passed this spring.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Friday that Madriz is the first person to be charged with dealing spice in Tippecanoe County. Though other arrests have been made, including two employees at a Lafayette tobacco shop in February, the prosecutor's office is waiting on full test results of products that were seized.

Madriz's alleged confession is likely what made it possible for the prosecutor's office to quickly file criminal charges.

According to a probable cause affidavit, sheriff's deputies went to Madriz's apartment Thursday to locate a man in an unrelated disturbance. Madriz then consented to a search of his apartment for that suspect.

Inside, Huber found a large bag that contained 45 grams of spice, along with small plastic bags, scales, a small amount of meth and foil strips with burn marks.

As of Friday night, Madriz was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined \$12,500 surety and \$1,250 cash bond.

August 1, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man beaten violently after outing sex offender, police say



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was punched, stomped on and kicked into unconsciousness last week for outing an acquaintance as a sex offender, court documents allege.

The victim, 32-year-old Ryan Moynagh, was not moving and found lying in a corner when Lafayette police were called to his Union Street apartment on July 26. Moynagh's head was covered in blood, and both of his eyes were severely swollen.

The suspect, 25-year-old Christopher McDaniel Jones, of Lafayette, had apparently been staying with Moynagh.

Jones was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with battery resulting in serious bodily injury; strangulation; criminal recklessness causing serious bodily injury; and residential entry.

All four counts are felonies.

Police Chief Don Roush said Moynagh was admitted to St. Elizabeth East hospital and was expected to be released this past Monday. He was not listed as a patient there Wednesday afternoon, a hospital spokeswoman confirmed.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Moynagh, Jones and a third man were hanging out and drinking on July 26. Moynagh reportedly asked the third man if he knew that Jones was a sex offender — causing Jones to become “enraged.”

Jones left, but when he returned later, Moynagh would not let him inside.

He's accused of reaching through the partially open door and choking Moynagh. Jones' body weight then broke the door chain, allowing him to get inside.

Jones, who turned himself in at the scene, allegedly admitted to choking and punching Moynagh, then kicking and stomping on Moynagh's head after he fell down.

The attack lasted 10 to 15 minutes.

As of Wednesday night, Jones was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$25,000 surety bond.

Court records show that Jones was convicted in Missouri in 2006 of two counts of first degree sodomy to a minor. He was released from prison in March 2011 and is listed on Tippecanoe County's Sex and Violent Offender Registry, which can be found at <http://www.icrimewatch.net/indiana.php>.

July 31, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man to spend 3 decades in prison for dealing drugs



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man will spend more than three decades in prison for dealing drugs.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said 27-year-old Arturo Fuentes was sentenced to 32 years in prison after pleading guilty to dealing and possessing cocaine.

Harrington says Fuentes was a significant supplier in the county who had more than 400 grams of cocaine, worth 30 to 40 thousand dollars when he was arrested in 2011.

Last May, Fuentes' wife told police she found what she thought to be cocaine in their house.

When police arrived, Fuentes consented to a search of the house and investigators found baggies of cocaine, \$4,000 in cash, guns, and a fake resident alien card.

Officers later found Fuentes had packaged cocaine in his mouth.

Harrington said Fuentes admitted having cocaine earlier to sell but denied knowing there was any in his house.

July 31, 2012: WLFI TV

Two men charged with half-dozen felonies



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Two men are charged with more than a half-dozen felonies after a burglary in West Lafayette early this year.

23-year-old Douglas Rasmussen, of West Lafayette, and 22-year-old Chad Tarbutton, of Fishers, are each charged with seven felonies, including burglary and theft.

Prosecutors say Rasmussen walked into an unlocked house on Pierce Street in February and took a variety of things, including a television and computer equipment.

Tarbutton allegedly drove Rasmussen to pawn shops to sell the items the next day.

July 31, 2012: WLFI TV

Charges filed against burglary suspect



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Charges are filed against a man suspected of breaking into a home causing police to place two schools on lockdown.

22-year-old Montez Harris is charged with nine felonies including burglary and conspiracy to commit robbery.

According to court documents, a string of robberies took place from April to May of this year.

Back on May 23, a man returned home on 19th Street to find a suspect loading his TV into a white car in an alley.

Police later found the same car had crashed into a parked car.

They found Harris inside a nearby apartment.

Sunnyside Middle School and Murdock Elementary were placed on lockdown after the burglary was reported.

July 31, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces burglary charges, suspected in arson

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man charged in a string of residential break-ins in April and May also is being investigated for setting fire to one of the homes, police confirmed Tuesday.

The suspect, 22-year-old Montez A. Harris, has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since May 23, the morning that a resident on South 19th Street returned home and interrupted a burglary.

This led to a brief manhunt and lockdown of Murdock Elementary and Sunnyside Elementary schools.

On Monday, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office filed nine felonies against Harris stemming from that break-in and five others that occurred between April 19 and May 14, all in Lafayette.

Those charges include conspiracy to commit burglary, conspiracy to commit theft and resisting law enforcement.

The April 19 break-in wasn't discovered until after firefighters extinguished a blaze that severely damaged a two-story home at 2507 Poland Hill Road. Once the tenant was able to go inside, she noticed that her television, jewelry box and other valuables were missing.

Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department confirmed Tuesday that investigators believe the fire was intentionally set, and Harris is being investigated for it. Police also are looking into whether Harris had accomplices for any of the burglaries, as he claimed.

According to a probable cause affidavit, after the May 23 manhunt, Harris allegedly admitted to break-ins and drove around with detectives to point out the homes and apartments targeted.

They included burglaries on April 20 at Sun Villa apartments off Poland Hill Road, where Harris also lived; on May 11 at an apartment on North Street; and on May 13 at a home on Union Street.

Jason Roland, the Sun Villa victim, told the Journal & Courier that his apartment was burglarized twice on April 20 — the first one occurring while he, his wife and their children were home.

Roland said they suspected Harris, who lived in their building.

“But police said they couldn’t arrest him on suspicion alone,” he said.

Roland said he’s fortunate that officers recovered his laptop in a nearby wooded area. But he’s kept a ledger of all items that were stolen, which he said adds up to roughly \$6,000.

July 23, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Zaragoza guilty of murder, 9 other felonies



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

As the jury forearm read aloud each verdict against homicide suspect Edward C. Zaragoza, the mother of shooting victim Kory D. Rogers let out an audible cry: Guilty of felony murder. Guilty of murder. Guilty of conspiracy to commit robbery. Guilty of conspiracy to commit burglary. Guilty of attempted theft.

Kathy Rogers’ emotional reaction was in stark contrast to a stoic Zaragoza, whom jurors found guilty of eight counts in all. He faces 45 to 65 years in prison for the murder count alone.

Jurors took slightly more than two hours late Monday afternoon to reach their verdicts — ending the first phase of Zaragoza’s lengthy trial, which began July 11 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

Late Monday jurors also found him guilty of two counts of possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon, based on Zaragoza’s 1997 conviction for burglary, Rogers’ shooting death and a handgun that Zaragoza’s girlfriend testified he was carrying between February and April 2010.

Rogers, 21, was fatally shot on April 8, 2010, at his home near Jefferson High School.

Zaragoza, 32, of Mooresville, waived his right to have jurors decide on another count of being a habitual offender, an enhancement that could add another 30 years to whatever sentence he receives.

Zaragoza waived his right to have the jury decide on another count of being a habitual offender, which could add another 30 years onto his sentence. That will instead be decided by Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams this morning.

This was Zaragoza’s second time being tried for Rogers’ killing. His first ended in a mistrial after only three days of testimony in May because an acquaintance, Wesley Coffey, told jurors about a polygraph test that was not admissible.

During the past two weeks, jurors heard from roughly 30 witnesses and had 100 pieces of evidence to review.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington and Deputy Prosecutor Elizabeth Goodrich alleged that Zaragoza, Coffey and a third acquaintance, Clint Laxton, had initially planned on April 5, 2010, to rob Rogers, a marijuana dealer, of a large sum of cash and marijuana that Rogers stole from his supplier's West Lafayette home.

Laxton was a friend of Rogers; Coffey was a drug acquaintance. Zaragoza did not know Rogers.

But the plan — which had Laxton posing as a hostage and Zaragoza pretending to be “collecting” for Rogers’ supplier, prosecutors argued — apparently fell through. This led to Zaragoza recruiting his wife’s cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, to accompany him instead on April 8, 2010.

Rogers lived at 2200 Ottawa Drive, in a basement apartment that he rented from his sister, who owned the home. His “front door” was an interior garage door off Summerfield Drive.

Jurors agreed with prosecutors’ theory that Rogers heard a noise, grabbed a shotgun that he kept near his bed and confronted the suspects in the garage. To this day, the handgun used to kill Rogers — believed to be a .40-caliber Smith & Wesson — was never found. A shell casing found in the garage and the bullet that struck Rogers were among the few items of physical evidence that investigators recovered.

Whether Zaragoza or Thompson pulled the trigger is unknown.

Because the suspects were never seen at Rogers’ home, prosecutors relied on cellphone technology to place them there, specifically by tracking “pings” that Rogers’ iPhone made to nearby towers each time he placed a phone call or sent a text message.

That included two pings between 1:47 and 1:55 a.m. and 10 pings between 9:25 and 10:20 a.m. on April 8, 2010, at the tower closest to Rogers’ home, on South 30th Street, according to trial testimony.

During closing arguments Monday, Harrington called it “scientific DNA cellphone technology.”

Prosecutors also relied on testimony from fellow inmates who shared cells at the Tippecanoe County Jail with Zaragoza, during which time he reportedly referenced a robbery and murder of a “young guy.”

Zaragoza was originally arrested on April 18, 2010, for the April 5, 2010, robbery conspiracy. He wasn’t charged with murder until January 2011, following a Tippecanoe Circuit Court grand jury investigation.

Also presented as evidence were recordings of phone calls that Zaragoza made while in jail to his wife, Shella Zaragoza, and aunt, Bonnie Balser. Though vague in specifics and names, prosecutors argued that it was Zaragoza’s way of conveying his involvement in Rogers’ death.

“I can’t spell it out, Shella, because if they drag him ... if they drag him into it, everybody is (expletive). That’s why I’m here, and he ... he’s not.”

That is believed to be a reference to Thompson, the co-defendant.

“If they talk, everybody is going to prison. Everybody is (expletive).” That reportedly is a reference to Coffey and Laxton.

Zaragoza’s court-appointed attorneys, Robert Little and Steve Meyer, argued throughout the trial that the state’s case largely was based on circumstantial evidence and built around testimony from unreliable witnesses — “crooks and jailhouse snitches,” Little said.

For instance, Strand Analytical Laboratories, which analyzed the shell casing found in Rogers’ garage, specifically excluded Zaragoza’s DNA as being on it.

The state argued that was because Zaragoza’s DNA would have been destroyed by the heat from the bullet being fired.

Little, during closing arguments, also pointed out the lack of fingerprints, trace evidence and blood found in Zaragoza's vehicle. He also questioned why, if Zaragoza dumped the firearm in the Wabash River as jail inmates claimed, why did Zaragoza's cellphone not "ping" on any towers between Rogers' home and the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge.

Defense attorneys also said that Coffey and Laxton reportedly plotted sometime between December 2009 and February 2010 — when Laxton and Wilson were staying with Coffey outside Phoenix — to "rip" Rogers. Laxton said that was not true. Wilson, however, told jurors that it indeed was discussed.

Thompson, who faces similar charges to Zaragoza, will stand trial next month.

July 23, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man, gang member sent to prison for 2011 armed robbery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man has been sentenced to 22 years in prison for his involvement in a gang-related armed robbery a year ago near Purdue University.

Rodrigo Medrano Jr., 24, pleaded guilty in June in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to robbery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class B felony, and criminal gang sentence, which is an enhancement under Indiana's criminal gang activity statute.

He was sentenced Friday.

Medrano admitted that, on the morning of July 22, 2011, he and 23-year-old Edwin A. "Corey" Rodriguez approached from behind a man and a woman who were walking near Pierce and Wood streets.

Rodriguez, who was carrying a handgun, pointed it at the man. The suspects then demanded cash — yelling out "We're 13," followed by "You just got robbed. ... You're gonna get shot."

The victims handed over their cellphones and wallets. No one was injured.

Medrano is accused of further patting down the man.

According to Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey, Medrano and Rodriguez are known members of the Sur 13 gang. The gun they used in the robbery belonged to Antonio Zapata, another Sur 13 member serving time in the Indiana Department of Correction for dealing marijuana and a handgun violation.

Rodriguez pleaded guilty to the same charges as Medrano and was sentenced earlier this month to 20 years in prison.

In each case, the gang enhancement received equal time to the underlying robbery charge.

July 22, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Details emerge on sexual attack near Faith Community

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The sexual assault continued for 45 minutes in or near a wooded area behind Faith Community Center — a 14-year-old boy, a 13-year-old boy and a third juvenile male against a 13-year-old girl.

She repeatedly said, “no,” throughout, but they did not stop.

The lurid details are included in partially redacted disposition orders for the 14-year-old and the 13-year-old, which Magistrate Faith Graham provided in response to a public records request by the Journal & Courier.

Even worse: The April 11 assault was preceded by four months of harassment and “blackmail,” including a photo of the victim topless that the 14-year-old somehow took without her knowledge and distributed.

And the assault was videotaped by the same boy, then shared and watched with others.

“(He) minimizes his involvement in the offense, accepts little responsibility and reports being annoyed with his current circumstances,” Graham wrote of the 14-year-old, who pleaded guilty in May to criminal deviate conduct and child exploitation.

“(He) demonstrated no remorse but bragged about the sexual assault, stating it was ‘funny.’ ”

And while the 13-year-old boy apologized for his involvement, the magistrate found it insincere. He pleaded guilty last month to criminal deviate conduct.

“Court finds by clear and convincing evidence that (the 13-year-old) is likely to repeat an act that would be a sexual offense ... if committed by an adult,” Graham wrote. “(He) needs long-term, intensive treatment for sexually maladaptive behaviors.”

On July 11, Graham ordered both teenagers be sentenced to an Indiana Department of Correction facility for juveniles.

Criminal deviate conduct is a Class B felony if committed by an adult; child exploitation is a Class C felony if committed by an adult.

Though both teenagers are identified by name in court documents, the Journal & Courier is not printing them because they were tried as juveniles.

They attended Faith Christian School, near where the sexual assault occurred.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office previously told the J&C that the sexual assault occurred, in or near a wooded area just east of Faith Community Center, but not on church or school property.

The involvement of the third juvenile involved is unclear. He was not arrested by the sheriff's office.

July 18, 2012: WLFI TV

Months of blackmail, videotape, part of sex assault by teen boys

Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - Disturbing details emerge as two area teens who sexually assaulted a 13-year-old female victim are placed with the Department of Corrections.

It's a story that NewsChannel 18 has been following since the April 11 incident. But few details have been released about the April 11 incident until Tuesday.

Court documents reveal the sequence of events leading up to the sexual assault began at least four months earlier.

They describe the 14-year-old delinquent as tech savvy, who took a topless picture of the victim without her knowledge in December. Then he sent the picture to other teens and used it to blackmail her for several months. He even used a fake Facebook account to help him.

For at least a week before April 11, he planned out the sexual assault. Documents state he, along with two other juveniles, including a 13-year-old co-delinquent, sexually assaulted the 13-year-old victim for 45 minutes. He videotaped the assault.

The assault continued despite the victim repeatedly saying "no." He later demonstrated no remorse, even bragging about it and calling the incident "funny."

Documents show the 13-year-old had seen the nude photograph, was aware it was being used to blackmail the victim, and did nothing to stop it. He also helped plan and execute the sexual assault. During the assault, he remained aroused, even after believing the victim was in pain. He has admitted to having an extensive exposure to pornography which began when he was 10 years old. It includes exposure to scenes of rape and bestiality.

The court found that both teens are likely to re-offend.

The 14-year-old continued to intimidate, threaten and solicit the victim, as well as victimize another juvenile female in a similar way. The 13-year-old was aware of this and did not try to intervene.

Documents show the parents of the 14-year-old did not monitor his activities on electronic devices and minimized his responsibility for the assault. They also demonstrated a lack of understanding of his significant sexually maladaptive behaviors and the need for restrictive supervision.

The court found the parents of the 13-year-old demonstrated a substantial failure to monitor his activities on electronic devices. While they have been cooperative during the case, they also lack a full understanding of the need for restrictive supervision.

The court found that both teens need long-term, intensive treatment for sexually maladaptive behaviors and ordered them to be transported to the Logansport Juvenile Correctional Facility for intake because a local juvenile detention facility cannot provide that type of intensive treatment.

When they leave, each will be evaluated and could be placed on the Sex Offender Registry.

NewsChannel 18 has made a public records request related to the third teen who was present during the sexual assault, but has no additional information at this time.

At the time of the assault, both boys were students at Faith Christian School, but school officials said the incidents did not happen at school or on school property.

It is the policy of NewsChannel 18 to not release the names of juveniles unless they are charged as adults.

July 18, 2012: WLFI TV

Man sold cocaine to officer 6 times



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces a dozen felony charges after police say he sold cocaine to an officer on six occasions.

33-year-old Jerome Milian faces six counts of dealing cocaine and six counts of possession.

Investigators say he sold cocaine to an officer six times between May 10 and July 16, all in the area of 13th and Union Streets.

He is currently in the Tippecanoe County Jail on \$100,000 bond.

July 18, 2012: WLFI TV

Driver's license, dentures help lead to accused burglar



Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Investigators said a driver's license and dentures helped lead them to a man accused of breaking into several businesses and stealing items.

29-year-old Shane Brasseur of Lafayette faces seven felony counts of burglary and theft.

Officers were called May 29 to four Lafayette businesses which had been burglarized of items including power tools, couch cushions and a boys BMX bike.

Investigators said Brasseur's driver's license was found at one location. At another, employees found a half set of dentures with the name Brasseur on them.

Officers found some of the stolen items at Brasseur's apartment.

He has bonded out of the Tippecanoe County jail.

July 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette mom charged with leaving girl, 4, alone at home

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman left her 4-year-old daughter home alone — with half of a cold, dried-out pizza and Oreo cookies to eat — Thursday night so she could hang out with friends, court documents allege.

A neighbor found the girl wandering through the parking lot of Pheasant Run Apartments, off Brady Lane, wearing a soiled diaper and a winter coat. At the time, it was 89 degrees outside.

The mother, 30-year-old Kasey N. Goodwin, was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony. She was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$5,000 surety bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Goodwin and her daughter live at Pheasant Run. But when the neighbor found the girl, she could tell him only that she lived "far, far away."

A Pheasant Run employee recognized the girl and let Lafayette police into Goodwin's apartment, which officers described as filthy, with food left out and clothes piled on the floor.

Goodwin, however, initially claimed that a friend was supposed to babysit the 4-year-old Thursday night. Lafayette police contacted the friend, who said that was never arranged.

Goodwin then allegedly admitted leaving the girl so that she could hang out with friends.

July 13, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman charged for leaving 4-year-old daughter alone



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Criminal charges are filed against a woman accused of leaving her 4-year-old child alone in an apartment while hanging out with some friends.

30-year-old Kasey Goodwin of Lafayette is charged with neglect of a dependent.

According to court documents, Goodwin's daughter was walking in the parking lot of Pheasant Run Apartments in a winter coat with soiled underwear Thursday evening.

A concerned neighbor called the police.

Upon arrival, police had to call apartment management to identify the girl and which apartment she lived in.

The police found Goodwin's apartment covered in dirt and old food.

Police say Goodwin left her daughter unattended for at least three hours.

July 11, 2012: WLFI TV

Second trial begins in murder case

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The jury is in place for the second murder trial for Edward Zaragoza and opening statements have begun.

Zaragoza is on trial for the April 2010 murder of 21-year-old Kory Rogers in Lafayette.

After three days of testimony in May, a mistrial was declared.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said a legal issue occurred in the courtroom, forcing the trial to end.

July 11, 2012: WLFI TV

Mother charged for dropping her child while resisting arrest



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Criminal charges are filed against a woman accused of dropping her child while resisting Lafayette Police officers.

21-year-old Brittany Getter of Chicago was issued a warning for trespassing at Cambridge Estates in Lafayette earlier this month.

According to court documents, officers were dispatched to the apartment complex Tuesday after two females got into a verbal argument.

When officers arrived, Getter was holding her one-year-old daughter while she refused to get out of a car.

Once she was removed from the car and taken into custody, she tried to pull her daughter out of the car.

While doing so, the child was dropped and fell to the ground.

The child was not injured.

Getter is charged with neglect of a dependent, resisting law enforcement, and criminal trespass.

July 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 30 years for selling cocaine near school

— David Smith/dsmith@jconline.com

A man who police say sold an undercover police officer crack cocaine has been sentenced to 27 years in prison and an additional three on community corrections, according to the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Roscoe Jackson, 31, was charged with eight counts; he pleaded guilty to dealing cocaine within 1,000 feet of a school, a Class A felony, and he admitted to being a habitual offender, according to court records.

The charges stem from two drug sales to an undercover officer in October within 1,000 feet of Jefferson High School in Lafayette, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Jackson was sentenced in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to 35 years on the dealing charge with an additional five years for being an habitual substance offender.

He was ordered to serve 30 years, including the three years on community corrections, plus 10 years on probation after he is released. Including time for good behavior, he could be released to community corrections in as little as 12 years.

A co-defendant in the case, Kharrisa Mallory, is scheduled for jury trial Aug. 7, according to Tippecanoe County's online court records. She is charged with maintaining a common nuisance, possession of marijuana and two counts of neglect.

Fired shot brings charges

— David Smith/dsmith@jconline.com

Charges were filed Monday in Tippecanoe County against a convicted felon who allegedly waved and fired a gun near another person on Lafayette's south side.

Rio Blake Michaels, 38, 1205 Washington St., was arrested June 30 by Lafayette police near South Fifth and Holloway streets after police received a call about 4:40 p.m. of a shot being fired.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Michaels initially told police his wife had fired a shot into the ground after hearing a burglar. His wife repeated the story, but police were unable to find a spent shell casing in the area. They recovered a 9mm Glock from Michaels.

Police then interviewed a second woman with a different story. She said she was on the porch of Michael's house, which her mother owns, when Michaels stepped onto the porch, waved the gun, and shot it into the air.

Police said they found a spent shell casing on the front porch of the Michaels' apartment.

Michaels faces three charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1: criminal recklessness, a Class D felony; carrying a handgun by a convicted felon, a Class C felony, and; carrying a handgun with a license, a Class A misdemeanor.

According to police, Michaels pleaded guilty Dec. 21 to burglary in a court in Milwaukee County, Wisc.

On Monday night Michaels was in Tippecanoe County Jail, being held in lieu of \$25,000 surety bond.

Police: Lafayette woman hid meth in body cavity



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman shoved methamphetamine into a body cavity after the vehicle she was riding in was pulled over for speeding June 27 on Indiana 25 North, court documents allege.

Amber L. Rice, 31, was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with dealing in methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine and possession of paraphernalia. Two of the counts are felonies.

The vehicle's driver, 31-year-old Haley J. Brooks-Miller of West Point, was charged in Superior Court 2 with dealing in methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine and possession of a controlled substance. All of the counts are felonies.

As of Friday night, both women remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$25,000 surety bond.

Their arrests came after Indiana State Police Trooper Ryan Winters spotted a vehicle on Indiana 25 North, just north of Interstate 65, traveling above the posted 40 mph speed limit. Winters recently became a K-9 officer, and the dog was used in the traffic stop.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the dog alerted Winters to the presence of some type of narcotic. Winters spoke with Brooks-Miller, who allegedly admitted to having contraband hidden in her underwear.

A female corrections officer from the Tippecanoe County Jail was called to assist and found a clear plastic bag on Brooks-Miller that contained 74 grams of meth.

Winters also found tubes near the front passenger seat — where Rice was sitting — along with a bag belonging to Rice that contained a spoon with crystallized residue and a used syringe, the affidavit states.

The meth that Rice is accused of hiding in her body was found after jailers learned a glass pipe had been placed in Rice's vagina. She was taken to a Lafayette hospital for treatment, and a bag with 50 grams of meth fell from Rice's pant leg.

The bag had been inside the glass pipe.

July 6, 2012: WLFI TV

Jail intake search finds pipe, drugs in woman's body

Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - Authorities said they found drugs in a woman's underwear as two Tippecanoe County women face a trio of meth-related felony charges.

Court documents show that on June 27, a state trooper stopped a car on State Road 25 north of Interstate 65 driven by 31-year-old Haley Brooks-Miller of West Point, with 31-year-old Amber Rice of Lafayette in the front seat, along with a male passenger in the back seat.

Authorities said they found a 74-gram bag of meth on Brooks-Miller and a 50-gram bag of meth on Rice along with drug paraphernalia in the car.

When Rice was taken to jail, officers said they found a pipe hidden in her body. Court documents reveal that Rice told them Brooks-Miller had given the contraband to her when the traffic stop was made.

Each woman faces a methamphetamine dealing charge, a methamphetamine possession charge and a charge of possession of a schedule II controlled substance.

July 6, 2012: WLFI TV

Man charged after fleeing from police

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man involved in a police action shooting in February faces a dozen criminal charges related to the incident.

32-year-old Javon Patterson has been charged with six felonies and six misdemeanors including dealing cocaine, resisting law enforcement, and operating while intoxicated.

As NewsChannel 18 previously reported, on Feb. 17, Patterson was pulled over on Poland Hill Road and as police approached the vehicle, a struggle took place. An officer then fired a shot into the back, side window of the car as Patterson sped off.

Police said he later crashed into the fence on the corner of Poland Hill road and Ortman Lane.

Court documents reveal a search of Patterson's apartment later that morning turned up cocaine, marijuana, and a loaded handgun with a serial number that was partially scraped off.

July 5, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man sought on drug, arms counts



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette man had cocaine and marijuana in his system the February morning that he fled from a traffic stop on the city's south end — prompting a police officer to fire his handgun — and crashed through a residential fence, court documents allege.

The driver, 32-year-old Javon D. Patterson, was formally charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with seven felonies and five misdemeanors — among them, dealing in cocaine; being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm; dealing in marijuana; operating while intoxicated; and resisting law enforcement.

A warrant has been issued for Patterson's re-arrest.

On Feb. 17, Officer Khoury Elias of the Lafayette Police Department pulled over Patterson's Lincoln Navigator on Poland Hill Road after he failed to use his turn signal and didn't fully stop at a stop sign. Elias also recognized the Navigator as belonging to a suspected marijuana and cocaine source nicknamed "Big Lord" or "J-Lord."

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Patterson rolled down his driver's side window for Elias, but he allegedly refused orders to keep his hands visible and step out of the vehicle.

As Patterson allegedly revved his engine and sped off, Elias fired one round into a rear, driver's side door panel of the Navigator. No one was injured.

This then led to a brief pursuit, which ended when Patterson's vehicle crashed through a fence and into a tree line on private property at the southeast corner of Poland Hill Road and Ortman Lane. Patterson tried to run, but he was caught shortly after.

Samples of his blood were positive for cocaine and marijuana, according to the affidavit.

The dealing and handgun offenses stem from a search of Patterson's Jefferson Street apartment, which turned up "stamp bags" of marijuana packaged for individual sale, small bags of crack cocaine and a .22-caliber handgun with its serial number partially removed. Marijuana also was found in the Navigator.

Afterward, an internal LPD shooting review board found that Elias was not justified in firing at Patterson. He was not disciplined, however, and instead received specialized training.

Elias returned to patrol sometime in March, Deputy Chief Dave Payne said Thursday.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Thursday a special prosecutor, former Howard County prosecutor Jim Fleming, was asked to review whether Elias would face criminal charges for shooting at Patterson.

Fleming found that Elias did not violate any Indiana laws, police Chief Don Roush confirmed.

July 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man, 21, charged with molesting 3 children

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man has been charged with forcing three children, all siblings unrelated to him, to perform sexual acts.

Jaime W. Saucedo, 21, was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with 12 felonies: two counts of child molesting as a Class B felony; three counts of child molesting as a Class C felony; three counts of vicarious sexual gratification, a Class C felony; two counts of performing sexual conduct in front of a child, a Class D felony, and; two counts of child solicitation.

The investigation began May 7, the day after an 11-year-old boy's mom caught Saucedo and her son watching pornography on a portable gaming system.

Detectives interviewed Saucedo on May 10, during which he made incriminating statements that matched all three children's statements.

According to court documents, Saucedo admitted to inappropriately touching the 11-year-old and two younger siblings, ages 8 and 5.

Saucedo is an acquaintance of the family and had previously been placed in juvenile detention for sex crimes, including acts involving the now 11-year-old victim.

He admitted being placed in juvenile detention for sex crimes and that the current victim, now 11, was one of his previous victims.

Saucedo said he became reacquainted with the family in 2009 and began to babysit the three siblings.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, the three siblings were separately interviewed May 9.

The eldest said Saucedo came over often and would put on "wrong" videos when the boy's parents were gone. He further described seven to eight times when he and Saucedo engaged in inappropriate activity.

The 8-year-old told investigators that Saucedo touched him or made the 8-year-old touch himself more than two times. During another interview on May 23, the boy described painful sex acts with Saucedo that made him feel bad.

The 5-year-old told investigators that Saucedo allegedly touched her genitals more than once and exposed himself.

As of Tuesday night, Saucedo was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined \$25,000 surety and \$2,500 cash bond.

July 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette teens admit to sexual assault near Faith Christian School

Two middle school-age Lafayette boys have admitted they sexually assaulted a 13-year-old girl near Faith Christian School three months ago — an act that apparently was recorded, videotaped or photographed.

On Tuesday, Tippecanoe County Juvenile Court Magistrate Faith Graham provided partially redacted paperwork to the Journal & Courier, which shows that one of the suspects, a 14-year-old boy, pleaded guilty to criminal deviate conduct and child exploitation on May 25. He's scheduled for a disposition hearing, the juvenile equivalent to a sentencing hearing, on Thursday.

Criminal deviate conduct is a Class B felony if committed by an adult; child exploitation is a Class C felony if committed by an adult.

Indiana defines child exploitation as producing, filming, photographing or creating a digitized image of sexual conduct by a child under age 18.

The paperwork also shows that the second suspect, a 13-year-old boy, pleaded only to criminal deviate conduct on June 28. A partial disposition hearing was held the same day, and Graham ordered the teen to be placed under 24-hour electronic monitoring.

He also was banned from Faith Christian School and Faith Church property "at any time for any reason." The 14-year-old could meet the same fate during his disposition hearing.

The J&C is not releasing the suspects' names because they were tried as juveniles. The suspects attended Faith Christian School.

Additional charges against them — child molestation and criminal confinement for the 14-year-old, child molestation and sexual battery for the 13-year-old — will be dropped.

The Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office previously told the J&C that the sexual assault occurred on April 11, in or near a wooded area just east of Faith Community Center, but not on church or school property.

Contacted Tuesday, Scott Grass, the administrator at Faith Christian School, declined to comment on whether the boys are current students. Grass said he was "not privy to the court's orders" banning the 13-year-old.

July 3, 2012: WLFI TV

Area teens admit to sexual incident with 13-year-old

Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - Two area teens have admitted to crimes of a sexual nature with a 13-year-old victim.

After a public records request related to fact-finding hearings that were scheduled for June 27, NewsChannel 18 received the documents Tuesday.

Few details have been released at this time, but it involves a 13-year-old victim on April 11. The boys were students at Faith Christian School, but school officials told NewsChannel 18, the incident did not happen at the school or on school property.

The 14-year-old admitted to a count of criminal deviate conduct, which is a Class B felony if it was committed by an adult, and a count of Child Exploitation, which is a C felony if it was committed by an adult. In exchange, the prosecutor will drop five other counts alleging delinquency that the teen was facing.

The 13-year-old admitted to a count of criminal deviate conduct, a B felony and the second most serious type of felony if it was committed by an adult. In exchange, five other counts alleging delinquency were dismissed. Court

documents add the teen must remain on GPS electronic monitoring with 24-hour adult supervision and is not allowed to be on Faith School or church property.

The 14-year-old has a disposition hearing set for July 5. The 13-year-old has a hearing set for July 17.

NewsChannel 18 will continue to follow this story and release more information as it becomes available. It is the policy of NewsChannel 18 to not release the names of juveniles unless they are charged as adults.

July 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue football player gets probation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Former Purdue University football player Aquinas “Cortez” Smith was ordered Friday to serve one year on supervised probation — with 90 days of that on home detention — for punching another man outside a West Lafayette bar 17 months ago.

Last month, following a two-day trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, jurors found Smith guilty of battery as a Class A misdemeanor.

Jurors acquitted him of the most serious charges: battery resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class C felony, and criminal recklessness, a Class D felony.

Smith also was ordered to pay \$5,861 in restitution.

The charges stem from a confrontation that took place about 2:30 a.m. Jan. 21, 2011, just west of Brothers Bar & Grill in West Lafayette’s Village. The victim, Wabash College student Charles Kelly, was standing outside the bar when he heard arguing and saw four men — one of them later identified as Smith and some football teammates — surrounding a fifth man, Brandon Parker, who was pushed against the wall.

Kelly testified during Smith’s trial that he tried to intervene by cracking a joke. It worked temporarily, because all parties went their separate ways. But shortly after, Kelly was punched in the left side of the face.

The blow knocked Kelly unconscious, broke his orbital bone in multiple locations and required four titanium plates be surgically implanted in his face.

Kelly did not see who punched him, but witnesses led West Lafayette police to Smith, who was seen fleeing the scene. Smith turned himself in a few days later.

Though acquitted of the most serious felony charges, Smith faces another legal challenge: On the same day verdicts were returned, Kelly filed a civil lawsuit, alleging that he continues to suffer from physical pain, mental distress and disability.

Kelly is seeking compensatory damages for his injuries, as well as compensatory damages for what the lawsuit describes as “conscious and intentional, reprehensible” actions by Smith.

Smith denies those allegations. The incident occurred his final year of playing football for Purdue University.

A Lafayette man who snapped a cellphone picture of himself pointing a firearm that was used during an armed robbery at Purdue Federal Credit Union a year ago was sentenced Thursday to 30 years in prison.

June 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Credit union robbery suspect sentenced to 30 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The sentence that Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 handed down to 26-year-old Xxavier Jones is a match to the one Busch gave Jones' co-defendant, 25-year-old Christopher A. Whirl of Lafayette, on May 31.

Just days before their scheduled jury trial, Jones and Whirl pleaded guilty to all 12 felonies against them: conspiracy to commit robbery; theft; three counts of robbery; and seven counts of theft.

Neither man had the benefit of a signed plea agreements, such as dropped or reduced charges, with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Jones and Whirl must pay a combined \$25,043 in restitution.

The robbery took place the morning of May 24 at Purdue Federal Credit Union at 1520 Union St. in Lafayette.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Whirl was armed with a handgun; and Jones brought a stun gun.

Whirl also admitted to holding his gun against a woman inside the credit union, and one suspect jumped onto the counter, demanding cash.

The duo was caught, in part, to a passer-by who followed Jones and Whirl after they left. They dumped their getaway vehicle. According to court documents, the vehicle was registered to Whirl and Whirl's girlfriend.

The suspects left their cellphones, with snapshots of the weapons they used, in the vehicle. They also left their sweatshirts with traces of their DNA.

June 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Gang ties net armed robber extra 10 years

Written by Mikel Livingston

A Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years in prison for his role in a 2011 gang-related robbery.

Edwin A. "Corey" Rodriguez, 23, was charged last July with conspiracy to commit robbery; two counts of robbery while armed with a deadly weapon; and two counts of theft. All of those charges are felonies.

At approximately 2:20 a.m. July 22, 2011, Rodriguez, along with Rodrigo Medrano, 23, of Lafayette, approached from behind a man and woman who were walking near Wood and Pierce streets. The two robbed the couple, taking their wallets and cellphones before fleeing the scene.

After pleading guilty, Rodriguez was sentenced Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court to two to 10 years each on the counts of robbery with a deadly weapon. The sentences are to run concurrently along with an additional 10 years to be served consecutively due to Rodriguez's affiliation with the gang Sur-13.

Aggravators cited by the court in determining the sentence included his criminal history and history of violating probation. As part of his sentencing, Rodriguez received a sentencing enhancement under Indiana's Criminal Gang Sentence Statute.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said his office will continue to take advantage of that statute to deter gang activity.

After the robbery, the victims told investigators that Rodriguez and Medrano said, “We’re 13,” referring to the gang Sur-13. They then ordered the couple to empty their pockets.

Rodriguez and Medrano proceeded to pat down the male victim, stating: “You just got robbed. You’re gonna get shot.”

The two were identified after officers found a Ford Expedition parked and running near the scene of the robbery. The victims’ wallets and cellphones were found inside along with personal paperwork for both Rodriguez and Medrano.

The case against Medrano is pending.

June 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man sentenced in drug sale to police

A Lafayette man was sentenced Tuesday to 35 years in prison for selling crack cocaine and methamphetamine to undercover police officers.

In April, 35-year-old James L. Hardaway pleaded guilty to four felonies: dealing in cocaine, possession of meth, dealing in meth and dealing in a narcotic (heroin). Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor’s office, Hardaway cannot appeal his conviction and will have his driver’s license suspended for 180 days upon release from prison.

Eight other felonies and one misdemeanor were dropped.

The charges stemmed from drug sales last fall. According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, Hardaway sold crack cocaine to a detective on Nov. 9, during which time he asked the undercover officer to help “get rid” of some meth.

The detective arranged another sale on Nov. 11, this time for both cocaine and meth, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

The arrest came this past February when Lafayette police saw a suspected drug deal, stopped the suspect and learned it was Hardaway. He had 13.6 grams of meth, 2.53 grams of heroin, multiple syringes and other paraphernalia.

June 27, 2012: WLFI TV

Gang ties net armed robber extra 10 years



Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - An armed robber gets an extra decade behind bars for being a gang member.

Edwin Rodriguez, 23, of Lafayette, was sentenced Wednesday to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty to robbery with a deadly weapon.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said ten years are for two counts of robbery, with a ten year enhancement for being a member of a gang.

Harrington said on July 22, 2011, Rodriguez and Rodrigo Medrano approached two people with a gun near Pierce Street in West Lafayette. Rodriguez pointed the gun at one of the people and robbed each of them of their wallets and cell phones.

Harrington said in the middle of the robbery, both men told the victims they were gang members.

June 26, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man sentenced to 3 decades in prison

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man will spend more than three decades in prison for multiple drug charges.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said James Hardaway pleaded guilty to four felony drug charges: dealing cocaine, dealing and possession of methamphetamine and dealing a narcotic.

Harrington said in November of 2011, Hardaway sold drugs to undercover detectives on multiple occasions.

Hardaway has previous convictions of auto theft, criminal confinement and battery.

June 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Buck Creek woman charged in fatal OWI

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Buck Creek woman had traces of marijuana and prescription painkillers in her system and had a blood-alcohol concentration above Indiana's legal limit the afternoon of June 7, when she was involved in a two-vehicle crash that killed another motorist, court documents allege.

Tamera J. Richards, 43, was formally charged Tuesday with eight felonies — among them, operating a vehicle with a controlled substance causing death; operating while intoxicated with a blood-alcohol content above 0.08 percent; operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing serious bodily injury; and possession of a controlled substance.

She also was charged with four counts of misdemeanor OWI and is accused of being a habitual substance offender, which is a sentencing enhancement.

Richards has been held in the Tippecanoe County Jail since June 8. On Tuesday night, she was being held on separate \$25,000 surety and \$1,000 surety bonds, jail staff said.

The charges stem from a June 7 crash on Harrison Road, near County Road 900 North, that seriously injured five people, including three of Richards' passengers. The other driver, 65-year-old Donna Mae Wall of Monticello, died June 20 from her injuries.

Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Capt. Denise Saxton, who is part of the Lafayette Metro Fatal Alcohol Crash Team that investigated the wreck, told the Journal & Courier last week that prosecutors had waited to see if Wall's condition worsened before filing criminal charges against Richards.

The day of the crash, Richards told deputies that she was driving south on Harrison Road, going around a curve, when a backseat passenger, 34-year-old Brandy B. Clevenger of Shadeland, grabbed the steering wheel. Richards claimed to not remember what happened afterward.

She struck Wall's pickup truck nearly head-on.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with Tuesday's charges, investigators immediately suspected that Richards was impaired because she smelled of alcoholic beverages, her eyes were bloodshot and glassy, and her speech was slurred.

Samples of her blood and urine were taken at St. Elizabeth East hospital, where Richards was treated for her injuries. The hospital's lab showed that Richards' blood had an alcohol concentration of 0.11 percent. Indiana's legal limit is 0.08 percent.

Another sample that was sent to AIT Laboratories in Indianapolis tested positive for traces of benzodiazapines, THC — the active ingredient in marijuana, and THC metabolites. The lab's blood sample showed a BAC of 0.089 percent.

The possession charges are from a cellophane wrapper containing 10 blue pills, later identified as Alprazolam, a prescription medication commonly used to treat anxiety, that hospital staff found in Richards' underwear.

She faces six to 20 years on the lead charge, OWI with a controlled substance causing death. If convicted of that count and being a habitual substance offender, three to eight years in prison could be added.

June 26, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman faces charges after fatal crash



TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County woman faces more than a dozen criminal charges after a fatal crash earlier this month in Battle Ground.

According to court documents, 43-year-old Tamera Richards of Buck Creek is charged with several felonies, including operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death and operating a vehicle with a schedule one or two controlled substance causing death.

On June 7, NewsChannel 18 reported the two-vehicle crash happened on Harrison Road just north of Battle Ground, sending six people to the hospital.

Police said the driver in the other car, Donna Wall, was airlifted to IU Health Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Documents say Wall died last week as a result of her injuries from the crash.

Richards was taken to Franciscan Saint Elizabeth East Hospital in Lafayette the night of the crash where the lab reported she had a BAC of .11.

June 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man acquitted of 1st set of sexual allegations

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was acquitted Tuesday of forcing himself on a female acquaintance after giving her a ride home a year ago.

But the defendant, 32-year-old Jacob I. Stidham, isn't in the clear: He will face two similar allegations in October.

Stidham was found not guilty of criminal confinement, a Class C felony, sexual battery, a Class D felony, and public indecency, a Class A misdemeanor, following a two-day trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Those charges stemmed from an incident on April 18, 2011, the night that Stidham drove a relative and other people home from a Lafayette bowling alley.

A female passenger, who fell asleep on the drive home, said she woke up to Stidham's hand down her pants. They were the only people in the vehicle at the time.

The woman further accused Stidham of exposing himself and offering her money for sexual acts.

Stidham was found guilty Tuesday only of operating while intoxicated with a prior conviction, a Class D felony, and two misdemeanor OWI counts, Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

A D felony is punishable by six months to three years in prison.

The OWI charges stem from an April 2, 2011, arrest in Battle Ground.

Charges in both cases were filed as part of a larger affidavit, in which Stidham was accused of offering a ride home to two women he picked up in Chauncey Village.

They thought Stidham was a taxi driver.

DNA left on a woman's breast led investigators to Stidham. That woman, too, told police that she was asleep but did not recall what took place.

The second woman said she was shoved out of Stidham's vehicle on Lafayette's south end after he allegedly exposed himself, and she threatened to call 911.

Stidham's attorney successfully won a motion last week to have the cases severed.

The remaining charges are set to be heard in October. Stidham is being held without bond pending that trial.

June 22, 2012: WLFI TV

Charges have been filed against a man and teen accused of robbing two gas stations in Lafayette

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Criminal charges have been filed against a man and teen accused of robbing two gas stations in Lafayette.

According to court documents, early Monday morning, employees at Casey's General Store on State Road 25 and the Speedway gas Station on State Road 26 were held up at knife point.

18-year-old Braxton Baker of Lafayette and a juvenile face multiple felonies. Baker has been charged with conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery with a deadly weapon, theft, and attempted armed robbery.

Prosecutors said the two suspects admitted to holding up a gas station in Rossville earlier that morning.

June 22, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Probation, not prison, for pellet-gun wielding man on riding mower

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man has been spared prison time for pointing what appeared to be a black handgun at police officers during an attempted traffic stop in March 2011, prompting them to fire a combined 10 gunshots.

The suspect, 43-year-old Eric W. Tendam, was struck by five bullets — four in his right bicep and shoulder area, and one in his right thigh.

In May, two business days before his bench trial before Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court, Tendam pleaded guilty but mentally ill to intimidation with a deadly weapon, a Class C felony.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, two additional counts of resisting law enforcement, both Class C felonies, were dropped.

Daniel sentenced Tendam on Friday afternoon to 312 days in the Indiana Department of Correction — but that was negated by a combined 312 days credit Tendam received for time already served and for good conduct.

Instead, he will spend four years and 53 days on probation. Daniel recommended that Tendam's probation be transferred to Texas, where he's been staying with his parents for the past several months. The judge, however, warned Tendam that Texas police have a reputation for acting fast and using bigger guns.

"Do something like this again, Mr. Tendam, and you might end up dead," Daniel said.

Tendam didn't respond to the comment.

The charges against him stemmed from a bizarre confrontation the morning of March 18, 2011, when Officer Michael Max of the West Lafayette Police Department spotted a man on a lawn tractor riding in and out of traffic near Purdue University.

The man — later identified as Tendam — then ran a stop sign and pulled in front of a truck at Garfield Lane and Stadium Avenue.

According to court documents, Max turned on his vehicle's emergency lights, pulled alongside the lawn tractor and told Tendam to stop. That's when Tendam claimed "there is a bomb coming" and displayed what appeared to be a black handgun.

At the same time, Officer Max Ridge approached the scene from an opposite direction. After spotting Ridge's vehicle, Tendam stopped the lawn tractor and marched toward Ridge — all the while still displaying the firearm.

Ridge fired seven gunshots; Max fired three gunshots.

Investigators learned after Tendam collapsed from his injuries that the black handgun turned out to be a pellet gun.

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Daniel noted that both Tendam and his mother have referred to him as a "victim" of the shooting. Though Tendam was hospitalized and has scars from his bullet wounds, the true "victim" is the Lafayette community, Daniel said.

“Driving through a city, whether on a lawn mower or in a car, while waving a gun ... all of us are less secure in our lives because of that,” the judge said.

Under the plea agreement, Tendam must provide regular updates on his mental health, and Daniel ordered that Tendam maintain mental health treatment while on probation.

He also was ordered to pay \$334.86 in probation and pay a \$200 public defender’s fee. His court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, said that \$200 fee is lower than is typically assessed because Tendam has had difficulty finding employment.

Tendam is a former Lafayette firefighter who was fired by the city after allegations that he set his Battle Ground home on fire and tried to stop firefighters from putting out the flames.

A Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury could begin deliberating as soon as today in the trial of a Lafayette man accused of planning an armed robbery that ended in the shooting death of 24-year-old Clarence “Baybay” Smith Jr. last July.

June 21, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man found guilty in murder trial



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Three men set up Clarence “Baybay” Smith Jr. to be robbed the night of July 28, 2011, when he was found dead from a gunshot wound in the hallway of a south Lafayette apartment, another Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury has ruled.

Jurors deliberated for roughly four hours Thursday afternoon and evening before finding 22-year-old Kevin K. “Smiles” Williams of Lafayette guilty of all charges against him: murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

Williams, who did not testify on his own behalf, faces 45 to 65 years in prison on the murder count alone. He’s scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 22 by Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch.

The verdicts against Williams are a match to those returned by another jury in April against one of Williams’ co-defendants, 24-year-old Dartanyan D. “BJ” Porche of West Lafayette.

A third co-defendant, 22-year-old Michael Anthony “C4” Foster of Lafayette, pleaded guilty to murder and admitted to shooting Smith. He was a key witness for the state and testified against both Williams and Porche — detailing how the trio plotted on July 28, 2011, to rob Smith after Smith called Porche that day to ask where he could purchase a handgun.

Smith and Porche were acquaintances and previously dealt drugs together, according to trial testimony.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey and Deputy Prosecutor Donna Frank argued that the trio lured Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail, where Smith was shot. Foster admitted to taking out a handgun, pointing it at Smith and pulling the trigger after Smith refused to hand over his cash.

The key issue for jurors was determining what Williams knew beforehand about plans to “hit a lick” — slang for robbing someone and getting money quickly — with Smith as the target.

Williams was represented by a court-appointed attorney, Kimberly Robinson.

Though Williams did not testify, other witnesses helped piece together his involvement. Only Porche and Foster were seen running from 1840 Summertime Trail after the shooting. Meanwhile, Williams and Foster’s 15-year-old cousin waited in the parking lot in Williams’ vehicle, which was backed into a spot for easy exit.

Williams then picked up Foster and Porche in a nearby neighborhood, where Foster stashed the gun used to shoot Smith in a recycling bin.

Foster and Porche have already been sentenced, with each receiving 50 years in prison, followed by five years on probation.

Investigators did not believe the 15-year-old was involved in the scheme, and he was never charged.

June 21, 2012: WLFI TV

Trio charged for passing fake bills across the Lafayette area

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Criminal charges have been filed for three people accused of using fake money at stores across Greater Lafayette.

23-year-old Vashaun Hannah of West Lafayette has been charged for multiple felonies, including conspiracy to commit forgery, forgery, false informing, and theft.

40-year-old Scotty Gatlin of Chicago and 26-year-old Donilla Dismukes of West Lafayette were also charged with conspiracy to commit forgery.

According to court documents, the trio would pay for items with the fake money then take turns returning the items to stores for real money. Some of the stores hit include Menards on Creasy Lane, Walmart on Veterans Memorial Parkway, along with many others.

Lafayette police are still investigating the case. NewsChannel 18 will continue to follow the story.

June 21, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man convicted of murder

Krista Henery

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The jury trial of a man charged in the 2011 murder of Clarence Smith in Lafayette comes to an end.

Witnesses took the stand Thursday in the case against 22-year-old Kevin Williams.

Thursday morning, testimony wrapped up when a detective with a Lafayette Police Department took the stand.

Williams did not take the stand and testify during his trial.

Closing arguments lasted about an hour and a half.

Williams was found guilty for the felony murder of 26-year-old Clarence Smith. He now faces up to 70 years in prison.

Williams was also found guilty of robbery and conspiracy to commit robbery. He was originally charged with five felonies, but after viewing lab results and other factors, prosecutors did not pursue charges of Williams possessing a handgun or a theft charge.

They said Williams along with Michael Foster and Dartanyan Porche planned to rob Smith during a gun deal.

When he didn't cooperate, he was shot and killed.

Foster plead guilty to murder in March and was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

Porche was found guilty of murder and conspiracy to commit robbery and was sentenced to 55 years in prison.

Williams faces between 45 and 65 years in prison for the felony murder conviction. The other convictions could add eight years to the sentence. He is scheduled to be sentenced August 22, 2012.

June 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder trial could end today

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Kevin K. "Smiles" Williams, 22, is on trial for five felonies: murder, robbery, conspiracy to commit robbery, theft and being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm.

Testimony on Wednesday focused on the police investigation. Among the witnesses was Detective Cecil Johnson of the Lafayette Police Department, who was involved in interviewing the suspects after Smith was found shot in the abdomen on July 28, 2011, in the hallway of an apartment building at 1840 Summertime Trail.

Williams and two co-defendants, 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche of West Lafayette and 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster of Lafayette, were accused of luring Smith there with promises of selling him a handgun.

Investigators allege the trio had plans all along to "hit a lick," or rob Smith of cash he brought to buy a gun.

The key issue for jurors is determining how much Williams knew.

He was not present when Smith was shot but instead was waiting in his vehicle in the parking lot. He then picked up Porche and Foster after they ran from the building toward a nearby neighborhood.

Foster pleaded guilty in March to murder, admitting that he shot Smith because Smith wouldn't hand over his money. Porche stood trial in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 and was found guilty of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

He claimed to have no knowledge of the robbery, instead arguing that Foster shot Smith in retaliation for a prior shooting committed by Smith.

Both Foster and Porche were sentenced to 50 years in prison, followed by five years on probation.

June 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2 charged in armed robberies

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An alert gas station employee foiled a robbery attempt early Monday by locking the front door after seeing one of the suspects go behind a pillar and put on a mask.

That detail was included in a probable cause affidavit filed Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with charges against the suspects, 18-year-old Braxton S. Baker and 17-year-old Benjamin A. Moore, both of Lafayette.

The two are accused of holding up Casey's General Store, 153 Indiana 25 West, at 1:05 a.m. Monday and Speedway gas station, 4325 Indiana 26 East, about 45 minutes later at knifepoint. No one was injured.

Baker and Morehouse each were charged with five felonies: conspiracy to commit armed robbery; robbery by means of a deadly weapon; theft; attempted armed robbery; and attempted theft.

According to the affidavit, both suspects initially went into Casey's and bought a drink. Then one of them — believed to be Baxter — returned with a knife and demanded money.

At Speedway, the duo stopped to get gas. A store employee said one of the suspects — believed to be Morehouse — walked in to pay. Shortly after, she spotted the second suspect put on a mask and walk toward the front door.

The employee locked the door and told the suspect to remove his mask. That's when he displayed a large knife.

About 3 a.m. Monday, Lafayette police found a vehicle in the nearby Meijer parking lot that matched the vehicle in surveillance footage from Speedway. Morehouse was in the driver's seat, and Baker was his passenger.

Both suspects gave police incriminating statements that matched details from the Casey's robbery and Speedway attempted robbery. A large knife and mask were found in Morehouse's vehicle.

They also allegedly confessed to holding up a gas station at Indiana 26 and Indiana 39 Rossville that morning. Detective Mark Pinkard of the Lafayette Police Department on Wednesday said the duo is not suspected of being involved in fourth armed robbery from early Monday at CVS in West Lafayette.

As of Wednesday night, both were being held in Tippecanoe County Jail.

June 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trio face charges of passing counterfeit bills

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Three people have been charged with passing several hundred dollars in counterfeit \$10 and \$20 bills at Lafayette-area businesses this month.

How were they caught? An off-duty West Lafayette police detective just happened to be running errands at two of the same stores they hit.

Two of the suspects, 40-year-old Scotty L. Gatlin of Chicago Heights, Ill., and 23-year-old Vashaun E. Hannah of West Lafayette, were charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with conspiracy to commit forgery, forgery and theft.

Hannah also was charged with false informing for allegedly providing a fake name and birthdate. The third suspect, 26-year-old Donilla P. Dismukes of West Lafayette, was charged only with false informing.

According to a probable cause affidavit, West Lafayette police Detective Jon Eager was shopping Friday at Menards on Creasy Lane when an assistant manager told him someone had used counterfeit \$20 bills. Eager then watched surveillance footage of the female suspect.

Afterward, Eager went to Walmart on Veteran's Memorial Parkway to shop. There, he spotted the same female suspect — later identified as Hannah — at Walmart's customer service counter. He called Lafayette police after the suspect and a male — Gatlin — left.

Hannah and Gatlin were stopped on Concord Road. Items found in the vehicle included tools and women's clothing. The trio is suspected of passing \$440 in counterfeit money at Menards; \$160 at PetSmart; \$280 at Home Depot; and \$320 at Target; and \$150 at Walmart.

Police said Hannah claimed that Gatlin approached her about using the fake money, with promises of giving her real money after returning items bought with the counterfeit bills.

They reportedly targeted elderly clerks.

Gatlin was being held Wednesday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$7,500 surety bond. Hannah was being held on \$12,500 bond. Dismukes was not listed as an inmate as of Wednesday afternoon.

June 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Burglary suspect waived to adult court

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager will be tried as an adult on allegations that he and five other people are responsible for at least five residential break-ins this past April.

Aaron C. Butler, 17, recently was waived from Tippecanoe Superior Court 3, the county's juvenile court, Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department said Wednesday.

Butler was charged Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with 14 felonies, including conspiracy to commit burglary; multiple counts of burglary; multiple counts of residential entry; and multiple counts of theft.

He also was charged with three misdemeanor counts of criminal mischief.

As of Wednesday night, Butler was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined \$12,500 surety and \$1,250 cash bond.

Galloway said Aaron Butler is the younger brother of 20-year-old Dustin E. Butler, a Lafayette man already charged in the same residential break-ins. Also charged were 18-year-old Matthew J. Rund of Clarks Hill and three other 17-year-old boys from the Lafayette area.

According to court documents, the group is suspected of committing four burglaries in Lafayette and one in Tippecanoe County on various dates in April. All of the burglaries occurred during daytime hours, when residents were not at home.

Galloway previously told the Journal & Courier that the suspects would knock on front doors to see if anyone answered, then force their way inside homes.

Flat-screen televisions, video game systems and cash were among the items stolen.

June 19, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man in court for homicide

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

It will be up to another Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury to decide what role a Lafayette man played in the shooting death of an acquaintance last summer that investigators allege began as an armed robbery.

Kevin K. “Smiles” Williams, 22, is on trial this week for five felonies: murder, robbery, conspiracy to commit robbery, theft and being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm in the July 28, 2011, death of 24-year-old Clarence “Baybay” Smith Jr.

Testimony began Tuesday.

Tippecanoe County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey and Deputy Prosecutor Donna Frank, who are presenting the case for the state, are arguing that Williams and two friends conspired to rob Smith and lured him to 1840 Summertime Trail with promises of selling him a handgun.

None of the parties lived at that address. Rather, it was near another apartment building where the suspects had spent a good portion of their day.

Phone records shows that Smith and one of Williams’ co-defendants, 24-year-old Dartanyan D. “BJ” Porche of West Lafayette, exchanged several phone calls prior to Smith’s shooting.

After Smith refused to hand over his money, a third co-defendant, 22-year-old Michael Anthony “C4” Foster of Lafayette, pulled out a handgun and shot Smith in the abdomen. Foster, who pleaded guilty in March to murder, took the stand Tuesday and admitted pulling the trigger.

Though Williams was not present during the shooting, prosecutors argue that he was the getaway driver. He’s accused of waiting in the parking lot of 1840 Summertime Trail — backed into a parking spot for a quick exit — then picking up Porche and Foster after they ran out a back exit and through a field.

Porche stood trial in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 and was found guilty of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery. He claimed to have no knowledge of the robbery, instead arguing that Foster shot Smith in retaliation for a prior shooting committed by Smith.

Both Foster and Porche were sentenced to 50 years in prison, followed by five years on probation.

Jurors on Tuesday also heard from police officers who responded to the shooting, including Lafayette K9 Officer AJ DeMello, who described for jurors how he and his dog, Tico, found the suspects hiding in a wooded area near Lafayette Country Club.

Smith had been involved in an altercation with Foster and Williams before, in February 2011, at a West Lafayette bar. Smith, however, declined to press charges and walked away from officers when they responded to the call.

June 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man gets 50 years in killing



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

During his sentencing hearing Thursday, Dartanyan D. “BJ” Porche again declared that he was not a knowing participant in a botched armed robbery last summer at a south Lafayette apartment building that killed an acquaintance, 24-year-old Clarence “Baybay” Smith Jr.

Flanked by his attorney, Kirk Freeman, and a number of Tippecanoe County Jail officers, the West Lafayette man stood up and said: “I’m still not guilty. I send my condolences to Clarence Smith ... but I didn’t do anything.

“He was my friend.”

Regardless, Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 sentenced Porche to 50 years in prison, followed by five years on supervised probation, for Smith’s July 28, 2011, shooting death.

Porche’s sentencing hearing was held in magistrate’s court at the Tippecanoe County Jail because of safety concerns that arose during his weeklong trial in April, said Capt. Kurt Wolf, commander of the Lafayette Police Department’s detectives division.

In magistrate’s court, public seating is separated by glass from the rest of the courtroom. About eight of Porche’s family members and friends attended Thursday’s hearing, with some sobbing loudly after Busch handed down the sentence.

No one from Smith’s family attended.

A Superior Court 2 jury in April agreed — as presented by Lafayette police and Tippecanoe County prosecutors — that 24-year-old Porche, 22-year-old Michael Anthony “C4” Foster of Lafayette and 22-year-old Kevin K. Williams of Lafayette lured Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail on July 28 with promises of selling a handgun but intentions to rob him.

Jurors found Porche guilty of all charges against him: murder, attempted robbery resulting in serious bodily injury and conspiracy to commit robbery. He faced up to 65 years on the murder count alone.

Meanwhile, his attorney argued that Foster alone had lured Smith there for retaliation. Smith, some time ago, shot into the home of one of Foster’s relatives, and the crime was never reported to police, Freeman said.

Foster, who already pleaded guilty to murder and admitted pulling the trigger, was a key witness in Porche’s trial. He is serving an identical sentence to Porche.

The outcome of Porche’s trial hinged on whether jurors believed the three suspects planned to rob Smith. That would meet Indiana’s definition for felony murder, which is when someone dies during the commission of another felony crime.

Busch noted on Thursday that events leading to Smith’s murder were similar to another robbery Porche participated in nine years ago involving a pizza delivery driver.

"The general outcome of that case was similar to the outcome of this case," Busch said. "I remember then you denying (it was a planned robbery)."

The night of Smith's murder, Porche entered the apartment building through the front door to meet with Smith, while Foster came through a back entrance. Busch said it implied that Porche and Foster wanted to make it appear that Foster was robbing both of them.

Porche is planning to appeal his conviction and sentences, Freeman said.

Williams, the third co-defendant, is scheduled to stand trial beginning Monday in Superior Court 2. He faces the same charges as Porche. Williams was not present when Smith was shot, but he's accused of helping plan the robbery and driving Porche and Foster from the crime scene.

June 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Glass firm's ex-bookkeeper charged with fraud, theft

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former bookkeeper for Lafayette Glass Co. Inc. is accused of stealing roughly \$50,000 from the business, in part by inflating her paychecks, stealing cash deposits and using company checks to pay her credit cards between 2007 and 2009, court documents allege.

Christiana M. Denny, 44, of Brookston, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with 10 felonies — corrupt business influence and multiple counts of forgery, theft, money laundering and fraud.

She turned herself in at the Tippecanoe County Jail about noon Thursday.

First Sgt. Tom McKee, a detective with the Indiana State Police in Lafayette, said Thursday that the total tally of missing money could be more than \$50,000. However, a five-year statute of limitations meant investigators could go back only to 2007.

And although allegations against Denny were first made in June 2009, McKee said subpoenas for Denny's bank and financial records from various sources did not come back until December 2011.

"The good part about financial crimes is that they leave a good paper trail, a money trail. But unfortunately for the victims, getting the actual paperwork takes a long time," he said.

McKee said Denny was fired from Lafayette Glass on June 1, 2009, two days after the owner's son saw Denny inside after closing and discovered cash missing from a safe, court records show.

Lafayette Glass' owners filed a report with the Lafayette Police Department on July 2, 2009. Detective Mike Humphrey said Thursday that he worked on the initial investigation, then asked Indiana State Police for assistance. McKee said that's because they first thought allegations against Denny stemmed beyond Tippecanoe County.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Denny began working at Lafayette Glass in the mid-1990s and eventually was given check-writing authority. She's accused of inflating her paychecks by \$1,000 to \$3,000 on numerous instances.

She's further accused of using the company's Sam's Club card for unapproved personal purchases, ranging from laundry detergent to rib-eye steaks, and of opening a credit card — most of the purchases were for gasoline — that was billed to Lafayette Glass.

Financial records also showed that checks from Lafayette Glass were used to pay personal credit cards that were opened under Denny's name.

The subpoenaed bank and financial records further showed that Denny regularly moved large cash amounts between two separate banks and accounts belonging to herself and family members.

June 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in fatal OWI crash

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man had a host of drugs in his system — among them, opiates and medication commonly prescribed to treat anxiety, depression and seizures — when he drove head-on into a tree Dec. 30, killing his passenger, court documents allege.

The man, 28-year-old John J. Venters, was formally charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with eight felonies, including operating a vehicle with a controlled substance in the blood causing death; operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death while having a prior conviction for OWI; and possession of a controlled substance.

Venters also was charged with being a habitual substance offender, which is a sentencing enhancement. As of Wednesday night, he was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail.

On Dec. 30, Venters was driving east on Kossuth Street when his vehicle crossed the center line, went off the road and struck a tree head-on near 12th Street. His passenger, 20-year-old Brandon Stansberry, was riding unrestrained in the front seat. Stansberry died instantly.

Venters faces additional OWI-related charges in Tippecanoe Superior Court 6 for an Oct. 2, 2011, crash in the 1100 block of County Road 750 East that injured Stansberry. In that wreck, Venters' blood tested positive for benzodiazepines, morphine and hydrocodone.

He's scheduled to stand trial in September for that case.

June 14, 2012: WLFI TV

Murderer sentenced to 55 years

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A man convicted of murder is sentenced Thursday afternoon.

Dartanyan Porche was sentenced to 55 years in Department of Corrections and five years' supervised probation Thursday.

Porche plans to attempt to appeal this sentence.

Just this past April, Porche was found guilty for the July murder of 26-year-old Clarence Smith.

He was also convicted of conspiracy to commit robbery and attempted robbery.

Investigators say Porche along with Michael Anthony Foster and Kevin Williams were going to rob Smith back in July of 2011.

When the robbery didn't go as planned and Smith didn't cooperate, he was shot and killed.

June 13, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man charged for passing counterfeit money

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces five felony charges of forgery and theft after detectives say he tried to pass counterfeit money for cigarettes.

Late last month, West Lafayette police warned about fake money being passed around several businesses including the Discount Den and Five Guys Restaurant.

Investigators say 21-year-old Devin Troupe was caught on surveillance video trying to pass off fake five and 10 dollar bills at several places around town.

Authorities said when they confronted Troupe, he identified a woman who had given him the money.

He said when he gave her authentic money back, she gave him 3 packs of cigarettes.

Troupe has also been charged as a habitual offender with previous convictions including strangulation and battery on a child.

June 12, 2012: WLFI TV

Man charged for carrying meth in plastic bag

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man was charged after police said he was found carrying products used to make meth in a plastic bag.

Detective Sowders of the Lafayette Police Department (LPD) said on June 6, 19-year-old Colton Devon Spear of Lafayette had materials commonly used for the manufacture of methamphetamine and planned on making meth.

Spear was seen leaving his residence on Schuyler Avenue at around 9:20 p.m. He was seen carrying a plastic bag.

An LPD officer approached Spear and asked him to put the plastic bag on the ground. Spear told the officer he was headed to a friend's house.

Spear initially claimed the bag belonged to him, but later said he found it lying on the ground.

The officer noticed salt and coffee filters were in the bag, both items commonly used to make meth.

It was later found the bag contained liquid fire, sulphuric acid-based. It also held a bottle with a hose taped to the top and a Mason jar that held a clear, cloudy liquid inside.

The liquid in the jar was discovered to be meth and ammonia.

Spear's residence was within 1,000 feet of a public Lafayette park, McAllister Recreation Center.

Spear was charged with Dealing in Methamphetamine, Illegal Drug Lab and Possession of Methamphetamine.

He is in the Tippecanoe County jail on \$12,500 bond and \$1,000 cash.

June 11, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman charged for stabbing boyfriend

Patsy Schmidt

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A woman accused of stabbing her boyfriend now faces several criminal charges.

Shanay Bagsby is charged with four felonies: battery by means of a deadly weapon, battery in the presence of a child younger than 16, criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon and battery resulting in serious bodily injury.

Police say Bagsby stabbed Jonathon Jackson Junior inside an apartment along Summertime Trail during the evening hours of May 30.

According to court documents, Bagsby first told investigators that someone else had stabbed Jackson, but eventually admitted she and Jackson had gotten into a fight that turned physical.

Documents say Bagsby told police she knocked Jackson onto the couch and stabbed him in the leg.

June 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

3 women arrested in Lafayette on suspicion of online prostitution

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An investigation into complaints of prostitution at hotels and motels near Indiana 26 East and Interstate 65 in Lafayette resulted in the arrests of three women Thursday night and Friday morning.

Justine K. Lewis, 38, Precious D. Brown, 22, and Geneva D. Barnes, 18, were booked into the Tippecanoe County Jail on suspicion of prostitution — performing or agreeing to perform sexual intercourse or criminal deviate conduct. All three are from Lafayette.

Barnes also was arrested on suspicion of false informing and possession of marijuana.

The investigation was prompted by the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, based on information that officers have received over the past several months about suspected prostitution taking place at nearly every hotel or motel off that stretch of Indiana 26 East, Detective Joe Clyde said Friday.

Detectives assisted the Street Crimes Unit during Thursday night's sting at the Baymont Inn.

The alleged prostitutes are not working out of the hotels and motels, Clyde said, but rather soliciting customers online and arranging meetings.

Both Clyde and Sgt. Brad Curwick, who heads the Street Crimes Unit, said the public may not realize that a number of Lafayette-based escort websites exist.

"This is our first go-round on this kind of investigation, and we can't say just how many there are, but we know it's a problem," Curwick said.

Lewis, Brown and Barnes were found via those websites, Clyde said. In the sting, undercover officers arranged to meet the women at the Baymont Inn. Brown and Barnes showed up together. Police said Lewis was not affiliated with them.

Clyde said investigators just happened to chose Baymont Inn. The hotel itself is not involved in allegations of prostitution.

"This investigation is also part of educating the general public and hotels in the area," he said. "We've been making contact with the hotels, telling them what to look for and what is suspicious."

The Journal & Courier contacted the Baymont Inn on Friday evening, but an employee said a manager was not available.

Barnes remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail on separate \$2,500 surety and \$250 cash bonds. Brown was being held on a \$250 cash bond.

Lewis posted a \$250 cash bond and was released. A published telephone number could not be found to reach her for comment, and Tippecanoe court records did not indicate whether she has hired an attorney.

Formal charges could be filed next week, based on a 72-hour hold request filed Friday by the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

June 8, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2nd plea hearing canceled for veteran who fired gun outside Lafayette bar Braman's jury trial scheduled for July 31

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Eric S. Braman, a disabled U.S. Army veteran whose plea agreement to firing gunshots outside a Lafayette bar didn't pass muster before a Tippecanoe County judge, may be headed to trial, according to court records.

Braman was slated to enter another guilty plea Tuesday, but according to court records, that hearing has been canceled. A jury trial is scheduled to begin July 31 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5.

Superior Court 5 Judge Les Meade refused last month to accept Braman's initial plea agreement.

That agreement called for reducing the charge of criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon from a Class D felony to a Class A misdemeanor and dropping an additional misdemeanor count of carrying a handgun without a license.

Meade's reasoning was that by pleading guilty to a misdemeanor, Braman could only be supervised — whether through community corrections or probation — for up to one year compared with up to three years for a Class D felony.

Braman was injured by a rocket-propelled grenade that killed two fellow soldiers in Afghanistan on Aug. 28, 2010. He lost his right foot and a portion of his right leg in the attack. Afterward he was diagnosed with multiple mental disorders.

Last month, Braman told Meade that his anxiety and uneasiness with large crowds is what prompted him to bring a handgun "for protection" while out drinking with his brother and friends on Aug. 26 and Aug. 27, 2011, at several Lafayette-area bars.

He pulled out the handgun that morning during an argument outside End Zone Sports Bar & Grill, 2408 Veterans Memorial Parkway South — firing one round in the air and a second round into the ground.

Gun wadding and debris struck a passerby, 31-year-old Andrew Studer of Lafayette, in the chest, knocking him to the ground.

Studer was not seriously injured.

Braman's attorney, Dan Moore, declined to comment on why the second plea hearing was canceled.

June 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman, 19, faces felonies in stabbing of boyfriend

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Formal charges have been filed against a Lafayette teenager accused of stabbing her boyfriend in the leg last week, severing a vein that required treatment at an Indianapolis hospital.

Shanay Bagsby, 19, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; domestic battery in the presence of a child under 16, a Class D felony; criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class D felony; and battery resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class C felony.

Bagsby is accused of stabbing 19-year-old Jonathan Jackson Jr. on May 30 in their apartment at 1851 Summertime Trail.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, when officers first arrived to the apartment, Bagsby allegedly claimed that she was asleep in a back bedroom when she heard Jackson screaming for help in the living room.

Jackson, who had a deep stab wound near his left ankle, also told officers that the suspect was a man named "Lamar" and that it was "over some old business."

Their lies unraveled after officers found evidence indicating that someone tried to clean up the crime scene. That included a pair of shorts with blood on them in the washing machine, a plastic bag with a wet shirt that had a substantial amount of blood and a sock in the trash can, also spotted with blood.

Officers also found text messages that Jackson sent to Bagsby, encouraging her to tell them about "Lamar."

Bagsby then allegedly admitted to fighting with Jackson throughout the day, both verbally and physically. During one of those fights, they both threw punches, and Bagsby grabbed a butcher's knife that investigators suspect was used to stab Jackson.

As of Thursday night, Bagsby remained in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$10,000 surety bond.

June 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

6 charged in series of daytime break-ins

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Lafayette and Tippecanoe County detectives have identified a group of six people — two adults and four juveniles — whom they suspect are responsible for at least five residential break-ins this past April.

The adults, 20-year-old Dustin E. Butler of Lafayette and 18-year-old Matthew J. Rund of Clarks Hill, have been charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with multiple felonies, including burglary, residential entry and theft.

A warrant was issued Wednesday for Butler's arrest. As of Thursday afternoon, he was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a combined \$20,000 surety and \$2,000 cash bond.

Rund, who was initially arrested in May, has since been released from jail after posting a \$12,500 surety bond. Amended burglary charges were filed against him Wednesday.

According to Detective Scott Galloway of the Lafayette Police Department, all four juvenile suspects are 17-year-olds from the Lafayette area. Two of them are related to Butler. Charges against them were filed in juvenile court.

Galloway said the group is suspected of committing four burglaries in Lafayette and one in Tippecanoe County. He is working with sheriff's Detective Travis Dowell on the case.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the Wednesday's charges, in one of the burglaries, Rund allegedly climbed onto the roof of a home so that he could break through a window.

Multiple flat-screen televisions, video game systems and cash were among the items stolen.

Galloway said some items have been recovered.

All of the burglaries occurred during daytime hours, when residents were not at home.

"What they would do is knock on people's doors to see if anyone answered. If no one was home, they broke in," Galloway said.

And in all instances, according to Galloway, the group forced their way inside.

June 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Charges filed in shooting on West Lafayette street

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Seven hours after a friend was shot in the back outside a home in a quiet West Lafayette neighborhood, Jeffrey L. Hancher turned himself in at police headquarters.

But the 51-year-old denied pulling the trigger, court documents allege.

Hancher, of West Lafayette, is accused of firing five gunshots at 52-year-old Martin Denney, also of West Lafayette, on June 1 outside 2241 Huron Road. One bullet struck Denney, though he was not seriously injured.

Two other bullets struck the garage of a nearby residence and a basketball goal.

Hancher was formally charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with battery by means of a deadly weapon, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class D felony; and pointing a firearm, a Class D felony.

A published telephone number could not be found Thursday to reach Hancher for comment. Tippecanoe County court records did not indicate whether Hancher has hired an attorney.

He was released from the Tippecanoe County Jail on Monday after posting a combined \$50,000 surety and \$5,000 cash bond, jail staff confirmed.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the criminal charges, Hancher and Denney had spent most of Friday morning and afternoon together, then got into some type of argument. While driving on Huron Road, which is near Denney's residence on Indian Trail Road, Denney got out of Hancher's vehicle.

Denney told investigators that he heard a gunshot and realized Hancher was firing at him. Detectives recovered 10 boxes of ammunition in the trunk of Hancher's vehicle.

The affidavit does not specify why Hancher and Denney were arguing. Denney was treated at a Lafayette hospital for a "through and through" gunshot wound to his lower back.

Lt. Troy Harris, commander of the West Lafayette Police Department's detectives division, said Thursday that Hancher claimed to not remember anything about the shooting.

Denney told detectives that his and Hancher's disagreement was "something so minor that he doesn't even remember what it was about," Harris said. "He didn't think it was something that he'd get shot over."

June 6, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Purdue football running back's plea hearing set

By JUSTIN MACK

A Purdue University football player accused of forcing a kiss on a woman at a West Lafayette bar after a night of drinking is expected to plead guilty to public intoxication.

Tippecanoe County court records show that Ralph E. Bolden Jr. is scheduled to enter a guilty plea on June 29 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 4.

His depositional hearing was scheduled for Tuesday.

Bolden, 22, was arrested on suspicion of public intoxication during the early morning hours of April 15.

According to court records, West Lafayette Police said officers were called to Where Else? bar, 304 W. State St., shortly after 2 a.m. April 15 after a guest, later identified as Bolden, refused to leave.

Police said Bolden left a woman crying after kissing her against her will. Where Else? staff then told Bolden to leave.

When officers arrived, Bolden left through a back exit that leads into an alley and walked away. Police had to call after him multiple times before he stopped.

Bolden, who led the team in rushing last season and in 2009, is recovering from his third ACL surgery since his senior year of high school in Folkston, Ga. His latest knee injury came in the 2011 regular season finale at Indiana.

Bolden ranks 17th in program history with 1,620 yards and has 15 touchdowns.

June 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Gunman avoids prison term

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An Indianapolis man has avoided prison for "firing blindly" into a large crowd outside a West Lafayette nightclub after his friend was shot in the neck 18 months ago.

Instead, 23-year-old Clarence Stephens was sentenced Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to one year on community corrections, with a recommendation on home detention, followed by three years on probation.

Because Stephens lives in Indianapolis, the sentence can be transferred to Marion County.

In January, Stephens pleaded guilty to criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class C felony. He admitted he pulled out his handgun in retaliation on Dec. 5, 2010, in the parking lot of the former Nick's Nightclub at 402 Brown St. in the West Lafayette Levee.

He fired off two rounds before his handgun, for which Stephens had a permit to carry, jammed. Though no one was hit by Stephens' gunshots, Kristen McVey, Tippecanoe County's chief deputy prosecutor, said it was likely someone could have been hit had parked vehicles not been in the way. The direction of the shots were toward the front entrance of Nick's, where a large group had been standing.

Stephens initially lied about seeing muzzle flashes, then admitted he did not see where the gunshots originated from. His retaliation fire actually was aimed in an opposite direction.

On Dec. 4, 2010, Stephens and his friends, Antwain D. Harrison and Deon Parker, drove from Indianapolis to West Lafayette for a party at Nick's they learned about via Facebook.

Several fights broke out inside Nick's that night, and West Lafayette police were called numerous times, eventually prompting the party to end early.

Stephens and Harrison were in the parking lot when Harrison was shot in the neck and fell into Stephens' arms. Harrison remains paralyzed from the neck down and is not expected to walk again.

Another Indianapolis man, Curtis J. Bacon, was convicted in October in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 of shooting Harrison. He's serving a 27-year prison sentence.

Stephens was a key witness in Bacon's trial, He said Bacon and his friends targeted Harrison after he pulled out money while dancing inside Nick's.

June 1, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 30 years in credit union robbery Gun was held to woman's head

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who held a handgun to a woman's head during an armed robbery at Purdue Federal Credit Union a year ago was sentenced Thursday to 30 years in prison.

Earlier this month, 25-year-old Christopher A. Whirl and his co-defendant, 26-year-old Xxavier Jones of Lafayette, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to all 12 felonies against them just a few days before their jury trials: conspiracy to commit robbery; theft; three counts of robbery; and seven counts of theft.

Neither man had the benefit of signed plea agreements, such as dropped charges, with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Whirl was sentenced Thursday; Jones' sentencing hearing is scheduled for June 20.

The two men have or will be ordered to pay \$25,043 in restitution.

During Whirl's hearing, Superior Court 2 Judge Thomas Busch noted that Whirl accepted responsibility by pleading guilty — but that was tempered by his claims that the woman who had a gun held to her head “exaggerated.” The woman had written a letter to the court.

Busch also noted that Whirl initially told police that he was in Chicago when the May 24, 2011, holdup occurred. He later changed his story to say that he only drove to Purdue Federal Credit Union, 1520 Union St., that morning but never went inside.

Surveillance video, however, captured two men inside. Whirl eventually admitted to being armed with a handgun; Jones brought a stun gun.

According to court documents, their getaway vehicle, a dark-colored sport utility vehicle, was found nearby shortly. It was registered to Whirl and Whirl's girlfriend. The suspects left their cellphones, with snapshots of the handguns they used and one of Jones' pointing a gun at the camera, in the SUV.

Deputy Prosecutor Tim Curry on Thursday argued for a 45-year sentence; Whirl's court-appointed attorney, Michael Trueblood, argued for a sentence between six and 20 years.

May 31, 2012: WLFI TV

Former Purdue football player found guilty

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former Purdue football player is found guilty after a confrontation outside of a West Lafayette bar.

According to Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, a jury found Aqurinas "Cortez" Smith not guilty of felony battery and criminal recklessness.

However, he was found guilty on misdemeanor battery charge.

According to court records, Smith was arrested after a confrontation outside of the "Where Else Bar" back on January 24 of last year.

Smith was a receiver for the Boilermakers and his last year of eligibility was 2010.

May 30, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former Purdue football player guilty of misdemeanor, not felony, battery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Former Purdue University football player Aqurinas "Cortez" Smith was found guilty Wednesday of punching another man outside a West Lafayette bar 16 months ago — but only as a misdemeanor.

Following two days of testimony, the Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury acquitted the 23-year-old Smith of the most serious charges against him: battery resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness, a Class D felony.

Smith was found guilty only of battery as a Class A misdemeanor, which is punishable by up to one year incarceration. A Class C felony has a sentencing range of two to eight years.

He is scheduled to be sentenced in late June by Judge Thomas Busch.

The charges stem from a confrontation that took place about 2:30 a.m. on Jan. 21, 2011, just west of Brothers Bar & Grill in West Lafayette's Village. The victim, Wabash College student Charles Kelly, was standing outside the bar when he heard arguing and saw four men — one of them later identified as Smith and some football teammates — surrounding a fifth man, Brandon Parker, who was pushed against the wall.

Kelly told jurors that he decided to intervene by cracking a joke about Parker's Pittsburgh hat, hoping it would diffuse the situation.

It worked temporarily because all parties went their separate ways. But shortly after, Kelly was punched in the left side of his face. The blow knocked him unconscious, broke his orbital bone in multiple locations and required four titanium plates be surgically implanted in his face.

Kelly did not see who punched him, but other witnesses led West Lafayette police to Smith, who was seen running from the scene. Smith turned himself in a few days later.

The key issue for jurors was whether Smith inflicted serious bodily injury. In Indiana, the offense of battery starts as a misdemeanor.

Smith's attorney, Brian Dekker, focused largely on Kelly's own admitted intoxication and the location of Kelly's injuries.

According to Dr. Michael Routsong, who treated Kelly in the emergency room that morning, the orbital bone is "thinner, more fragile than other bones in the body."

Routsong also said, however, that the severity of Kelly's injuries were uncommon, compared to other facial injuries the doctor has seen before. When asked by Dekker whether Kelly had weak bone density, Routsong said that was not tested but would be unusual for someone Kelly's age.

Though acquitted of the most serious felony charges, Smith faces another legal challenge: Kelly filed a civil lawsuit against him Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. Hearing dates in that case have not yet been scheduled.

May 25, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man sentenced 44 years for year of molesting 10-year-old girl

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was sentenced Friday to 44 years in prison after being found guilty last month of repeatedly forcing a 10-year-old girl to perform sexual acts with him for nearly a year.

The lengthy sentence handed down by Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 came after numerous letters were submitted from friends of 62-year-old Charles S. Day. Some of the letters specifically asked for leniency.

In April, Day was found guilty of three counts of child molesting as a Class A felony; attempted child molesting as a Class A felony; two counts of child molesting as a Class C felony; and child solicitation, a Class D felony, following a two-day jury trial.

The victim was among the witnesses who testified. Day is an acquaintance of the girl's parents, and she often slept over at his Lafayette home when her father worked late-night shifts.

The girl would sleep either in Day's room or his wife's room. The couple had separate bedrooms.

According to court documents, the girl told investigators that Day paid her \$20 and called it "their little secret."

Incidents occurred between March 2010 and February 2011, beginning when she was 10 years old.

May 25, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man spared prison in fondling

A Lafayette man will not serve any time in prison for fondling a 6-year-old girl in his care.

Benjamin V. Root, 38, pleaded guilty in April in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to one count of child molesting as a Class C felony. An identical count was dropped under terms of a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The victim's mother asked that Root not receive any time in jail or prison. He instead received six years on community corrections and one year on probation.

The girl told her mother last October that Root removed her underwear and fondled her. According to court documents, Root admitted to having the girl touch his genitals on three separate occasions since she turned 6 and that it sexually aroused him.

May 23, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue dean sentenced to probation for theft of pumpkins, light bulbs and more

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Former Purdue University associate dean Robert P. "Pablo" Malavenda has been spared incarceration for stealing pumpkins, light bulbs, smoke alarms and other household items from a local Walmart last October a petty crime that ultimately cost him his job.

Instead the 50-year-old Malavenda, of West Lafayette, received a two-year sentence on probation after pleading guilty April 24 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to one count of theft, a Class D felony.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, a misdemeanor count of conversion was dropped.

In handing down the sentence, Judge Les Meade said sending Malavenda to jail or prison would not benefit him or the community. What Malavenda needs, the judge said, is continued counseling, which Malavenda has received weekly since his arrest.

The charges against him stemmed from events on Oct. 8, 2011, when Malavenda was caught on surveillance cameras at the Walmart Supercenter in West Lafayette returning \$160.17 worth of items that he did not actually purchase.

This involved a scheme in which Malavenda legitimately bought household goods, loaded them in his vehicle, then used the receipts to steal those same items. He then returned some of the items for cash, all in the same afternoon at the same store.

During today's sentencing hearing, Deputy Prosecutor Greg Loyd told the court that Malavenda used the same scheme to steal hair trimmers, a car charger, shampoo, socks and deodorant from the Walmart Supercenter off Indiana 26 East in Lafayette on Sept. 18, 2011.

He will not be charged in the case as part of the plea agreement.

Malavenda said in court today that he has struggled with urges all his life to steal items that don't belong to him, whether they be "Splenda packets from a restaurant" to the items at Walmart.

He told Meade that a therapist informally diagnosed him with obsessive compulsive disorder and kleptomania. Malavenda estimated taking things that don't belong to him more than 30 times in his life.

Last fall, Malavenda said stress from a new supervisor at Purdue enhanced his urges resulting in his not thinking rationally.

Purdue fired Malavenda shortly after his arrest.

As associate dean, Malavenda oversaw more than 690 student activities and organizations on the West Lafayette campus. His duties included handing down discipline for student groups that violated university policies.

May 23, 2012: WLFITV

Former associate Purdue dean sentenced to probation

Patsy Schmidt

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former Purdue associate dean was sentenced Wednesday.

Pablo Malavenda was sentenced to two years supervised probation for theft.

According to Judge Les Meade, the reason Malavenda was not sentenced to any jail time was proof of good character. The judge read letters from Malavenda's family and members of the community. However, Judge Meade made it clear that character is also how you behave when nobody is looking.

Malavenda was charged for the theft of household items, such as bedding, pumpkins and light bulbs in October 2011. Investigators say Malavenda bought several items from the Walmart in West Lafayette. He returned to the store with the same bags, put the same items he just bought into those bags, and showed his old receipt. He went back, and used his original receipts to return the stolen merchandise for \$160.

In court Wednesday, the deputy prosecutor told the court that Malavenda used the same method the Walmart Supercenter in Lafayette in September 2011.

Malavenda told the judge that a therapist informally diagnosed him with obsessive compulsive disorder and kleptomania. Meade said two years will be the right amount of time for Malavenda to get proper treatment.

Malavenda was no longer employed at Purdue University by the end of October.

May 22, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man enters plea in bizarre West Lafayette shooting

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man has admitted to pointing a pellet gun at two police officers following an attempted traffic stop in March 2011, prompting them to fire a combined 10 gunshots.

The suspect, 43-year-old Eric W. Tendam, was struck by five bullets — four in his right bicep and shoulder area, and one in his right thigh.

Tendam had been scheduled for a bench trial beginning Tuesday before Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court. Instead, during an unscheduled hearing Friday, he pleaded guilty but mentally ill to intimidation with a deadly weapon, a Class C felony.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, two additional counts of resisting law enforcement, both Class D felonies, will be dropped.

Tendam is scheduled to be sentenced in late June. The plea agreement leaves the length of Tendam's sentence up to Daniel and for the standard range for a Class C felony, two to eight years in prison.

The charges stemmed from a bizarre confrontation the morning of March 18, 2011, when Officer Michael Max of the West Lafayette Police Department spotted a man on a lawn tractor riding in and out of traffic near Purdue U

The man — Tendam — then ran a stop sign and pulled in front of a truck at Garfield Lane and Stadium Avenue.

According to court documents, Max turned on his vehicle's emergency lights, pulled alongside the lawn tractor and told Tendam to stop.

That's when Tendam claimed "There is a bomb coming" and displayed what appeared to be a black handgun.

At the same time, Officer Max Ridge approached the scene from an opposite direction. After spotting Ridge's vehicle, Tendam stopped the lawn tractor and marched toward Ridge while still displaying the firearm.

Ridge fired seven gunshots; Max fired three gunshots.

Investigators learned after Tendam collapsed from his injuries that the black handgun turned out to be a pellet gun.

Tendam, who has been staying with his parents in Texas for the past several months, returned to Texas pending his sentencing hearing.

May 17, 2012: WLFITV

Man charged in Lafayette robbery

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - Charges were filed against the man accused of breaking into a woman's home while she was asleep on the couch.

28-year-old Phillip Hutchinson, Jr. of Lafayette faces seven felony charges, including burglary, robbery, criminal confinement, and possession of cocaine.

In the early morning hours of May 11, police said Hutchinson entered a home on South 28th Street in Lafayette.

Court documents revealed the woman who lived there was asleep on the couch when Hutchinson stood over her and used his elbow to keep her from getting up. When he acted like he was going to hit her, she stopped struggling.

Documents said after Hutchinson left, the woman found more than \$140 missing from her purse.

Later, officers pulled Hutchinson's car over and noted he matched the woman's description and found him in possession of about \$140 as well as cocaine and ecstasy.

The woman was brought in to identify Hutchinson and said she was 99% sure he was the man who had broken into her home.

May 16, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man faces charges in southside home invasion

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces numerous felonies stemming from a May 11 home invasion on the city's south end, during which a female tenant was assaulted. She was not seriously injured.

Phillip W. Hutchinson Jr., 28, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with burglary, a Class B felony; robbery, a Class B felony; criminal confinement resulting in bodily injury, a Class C felony; residential entry,

a Class D felony; theft, a Class D felony; possession of cocaine, a Class D felony; and possession of a controlled substance, a Class D felony.

As of Wednesday night, Hutchinson was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail without bond.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, a resident on South 28th Street told Lafayette police that she was woken up about 3:19 a.m. and saw a man standing over her. She believed that she left a side door unlocked before falling asleep on the couch.

The woman tried to stand up, but the man allegedly shoved his elbow into her chest and told her to shut up. He then cocked his arm back, as though to hit her, the woman alleged, but eased off after she complied.

The woman said the man had been sweating and made comments about needing drugs and suffering from withdrawals. After he left, the woman found that \$140 in 20-dollar bills and about \$20 in various denominations were missing from her purse.

Hutchinson was arrested after Lafayette police stopped a vehicle about three blocks from the woman's home. Hutchinson, who was alone in the car, matched the description the woman provided to investigators.

Police said they recovered \$140 in 20-dollar bills and two \$5 bills from Hutchinson's pocket, along with a plastic bag that contained cocaine and another bag that contained four Ecstasy pills.

May 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 63 years for trying to kill ex-girlfriend

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man was handed a 63-year prison sentence Monday for trying to kill his ex-girlfriend by firing multiple gunshots into her vehicle 16 months ago.

In April, a Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury found 47-year-old Rickie B. Gilliam guilty of 12 felonies and one misdemeanor, including two counts of attempted murder; two counts of attempted aggravated battery; carrying a handgun without a license; and dealing in marijuana.

Judge Thomas Busch then found Gilliam guilty of being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm.

The 63-year sentence was 10 years shy of the maximum that Gilliam faced.

On Jan. 15, 2011, Gilliam's ex-girlfriend and the mother of his child, Heather B. Short, and a male friend were in her vehicle outside of Economy Inn, 2200 Sagamore Parkway North in Lafayette, when another vehicle pulled up.

According to trial testimony, Short told dispatchers in a 911 call that Gilliam fired numerous gunshots into the car. At one point, Gilliam stopped shooting, kicked the vehicle, then fired again.

Neither Short nor her friend were injured.

Short and Gilliam had broken up a week before the shooting, and Gilliam kicked her out of his home.

Lafayette police, including a SWAT team, went to Gilliam's home at 920 N. 23rd St. the morning of Jan. 15, 2011, but he was not home. Officers, however, had a search warrant and were able to get inside.

The dealing marijuana charge was based on roughly 3 pounds of marijuana found in Gilliam's house. Investigators also recovered scales and ammunition

West Lafayette man gets 25 years for dealing cocaine

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette man was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison for selling cocaine out of his home, which led to his girlfriend's children testing positive for the drug.

Dandre C. Matlock, 29, was found guilty in April of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class A felony; maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony; possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; and two counts of neglect of a dependent, both Class C felonies, following a two-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Jurors found him not guilty of two counts of receiving stolen property for the firearms, an AK90 assault rifle and a 9 mm handgun, that had been reported stolen in two separate residential burglaries.

Matlock's prison time will be followed by five years on community corrections — some combination of work release, home detention and day reporting — and 10 years on probation.

The charges stem from Matlock's arrest on Aug. 11, 2011, after police showed up at his home at 3327 Edison Drive in search of another person.

While there, officers saw Matlock speaking to a man holding a corner of a plastic bag that was filled with a white, powdery substance. Matlock refused to answer the door, but investigators were able to get a search warrant.

According to Prosecutor Pat Harrington, police found trace amounts of marijuana in grinders; 119 grams of cocaine in a hard, brick-like form that had an estimated value of \$11,000; and three firearms, two of which had been reported stolen during 2009 burglaries.

The neglect charges were for his girlfriend's children, ages 5 and 7, who were inside the home when officers showed up with the search warrant. The children tested positive for cocaine.

During Monday's sentencing hearing, Officer Nathan LaMar of the Lafayette Police Department's Street Crimes Unit testified that Matlock is affiliated with the Midwest Kingz gang.

May 14, 2012: WLFITV

Man faces decades in jail for cocaine

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man faces decades in prison for his conviction on six charges.

29-year-old Dandre Craig Matlock was sentenced Monday to 25 years in prison, followed by 5 years in community corrections and 10 years on probation.

Last month, a jury convicted Matlock on five felonies and one misdemeanor, including dealing cocaine and two counts of neglect of a dependent.

Police said they went to Matlock's home and found a four-ounce brick of cocaine worth \$12,000, as well as three guns previously reported stolen.

May 14, 2012: WLFITV

Man gets 63 years for fired shots

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A Lafayette man who fired shots at the mother of his child will now face more than 60 years in prison for the crime.

47-year-old Rickie Gilliam was sentenced to 63 years in the department of corrections for 13 criminal charges, including two counts of attempted murder.

A jury found him guilty of the crimes last month.

In January of last year, Gilliam followed the mother of his child and a male friend to the Economy Inn, jumped out of his car, and started shooting at the other two people as they drove off.

May 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dayton man gets 40 years for cooking meth



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Dayton man was sentenced Friday to 40 years in prison for helping to cook methamphetamine that was tossed out of a car window during a traffic stop and brief police chase 16 months ago.

That will be served after another 10-year sentence that Richard L. Young, 30, was handed for violating terms of his probation in a prior drug conviction — making his total prison time 50 years.

In April, following a two-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2, Young was found guilty of seven felonies and three misdemeanors, among them, conspiracy to commit dealing in meth; possession of meth; maintaining a common nuisance; and unlawful purchase of pseudoephedrine.

Judge Thomas Busch then found Young guilty of being a habitual substance offender, which accounted for eight years of the 40-year sentence Young was handed Friday.

Young was a passenger in a vehicle driven by his girlfriend, Angela C. Boorom, who tried to flee from Indiana State Police on Jan. 22, 2011, on County Road 550 East in Tippecanoe County.

Boorom had run a stop sign.

During the brief pursuit, someone in the car tossed a thermos and plastic pitcher out the car window. Both items contained a substance that tested positive for ammonia, and the pitcher also had about 4 grams of meth.

Meth made in small batches is known as the one-pot method — allowing cooks to mix up a batch essentially anywhere.

The pursuit led to an investigation in which meth and paraphernalia were found in Young's home on Clifty Falls Lane, a street in Dayton.

At the time of his arrest, Young was still on probation for a 2002 conviction in Tippecanoe County for dealing meth, operating while intoxicated and other felonies.

May 11, 2012: WLFITV

Man sentenced after Lafayette meth lab explosion



Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette meth lab explosion leads to six years of prison time for Steven Hanna, 27.

Hanna allowed two men in his residence near 8th and Brown to cook meth in October 2011. While Hanna was asleep in the living room, the lab exploded.

The three men ran out, dropping the materials needed to make meth in a trash can in the alley, which police later found. One of the men had chemical burns on his hands, face and arms.

Hanna pleaded guilty to conspiracy to manufacture meth.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said in addition to the six years of prison time, Hanna was also sentenced to four years of probation.

May 11, 2012: WLFI TV

Man sentenced in church burglary



Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Burglary of a Lafayette church brings a 9-year sentence for Kyle Howard, 21, of Lafayette.

Police said Howard and two others broke into the Elmwood Church of Christ in July 2011 and stole a guitar, three video projectors, laptop computers and computer equipment.

Howard pleaded guilty to one count of burglary.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said he will spend almost one year in prison, four years in community corrections and four years of probation. He's also not allowed to have any contact with the church and must pay \$2,500 in restitution.

May 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man gets 6 years in meth fire

A Lafayette man who allowed two people to cook methamphetamine in his downtown apartment — resulting in an explosion and fire that shut down Brown Street — was sentenced Thursday to six years in prison, followed by four years on probation.

Steven K. Hanna, 26, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine, a Class B felony.

Hanna had been slated to stand trial beginning Tuesday.

The explosion and fire at Hanna's downtown Lafayette apartment injured 32-year-old Willard Dunn of Lafayette. Dunn, who had been cooking meth with a woman in Hanna's apartment, suffered severe burns on his hands, face and legs.

May 11, 2012: WLFITV

Meth lab tossed from car nets man 40 years

Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County man will serve 40 years in prison after he throws an active meth lab out of his car window.

Richard Young, 30, of Dayton was convicted of seven felonies and three misdemeanors in relation an incident in January of 2011. He's also a habitual substance offender.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said a judge sentenced Young to 40 years in prison and three years probation for the latest convictions Friday. He was also sentenced to 10 years in prison for a probation violation.

May 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman who impersonated public servant spared prison 'Spoofcard' used to impersonate prosecutor, mislead witness

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A northwest Indiana woman has been spared prison for trying to sabotage her boyfriend's armed robbery trial by pretending that she worked in the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office and calling a key witness.

Sharnetta M. Barnes, 24, was instead sentenced Thursday morning to two years on community corrections — some combination of work release, home detention and day reporting — by Judge Les Meade of Tippecanoe Superior Court 5

Barnes pleaded guilty in January to attempted obstruction of justice, a Class D felony, and impersonating a public servant, a Class A misdemeanor.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, an additional count of impersonating a public servant was dropped.

The judge approved allowing Barnes to transfer her sentence to Lake County.

In September 2010, Barnes had been dating Edward D. Mercer, one of three northwest Indiana men accused of participating in a botched robbery that turned into a shootout in the parking lot of a Subway restaurant at 3990 Indiana 38 East. No one was injured.

That afternoon, Mercer and his two co-defendants were in Lafayette to "buy" Davin chrome wheels that Indianapolis residents Courtney Robinson and Kyle Bostic posted for sale on Craigslist. Neither party has ties to the area, instead choosing Lafayette as a central meeting point.

The wheels typically list for upward of \$1,000 each.

Barnes admitted to calling Robinson the night before her boyfriend's trial and using a service called "SpoofCard" to make his cellphone's caller ID read (765) 423-9305 — the general number for the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

She told Robinson the trial had been rescheduled for a later date.

According to court documents, Robinson and Bostic were suspicious of the call and showed up to prosecutor's office the next day to speak with someone in person.

Barnes claimed that the SpoofCard was given to her by the mother of Mercer's co-defendant, Jarrod E. Rodriguez. The mother has not been charged on that allegation.

Barnes penned a letter to the court detailing changes she wants to make to better her life.

Both Mercer and Rodriguez were found guilty of robbery and theft and sentenced to prison. The third co-defendant, Rodriguez's father, Eugene A. Hall, pleaded guilty and testified against his son in exchange for lesser charges. He, too, was sent to prison.

May 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Judge rejects soldier Braman's plea Misdemeanor treatment in shooting deemed inappropriate

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Adjusting to civilian life was difficult for U.S. Army veteran Eric S. Braman. The Lafayette native lost his lower right leg in Afghanistan on Aug. 28, 2010, after a rocket-propelled grenade struck the military vehicle he was riding in.

During his recovery, Braman was diagnosed with multiple mental disorders — among them, adjustment disorder, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to his attorney, Dan Moore.

At what was supposed to be a sentencing hearing Wednesday, Moore recounted these details and others. He may get a second chance to give his client's background story after a Tippecanoe County judge rejected a plea agreement that would have reduced a Class D felony for firing a handgun in public to a Class A misdemeanor.

Braman told a Tippecanoe County judge on Wednesday that it was his anxiety and uneasiness in large crowds that prompted him to bring a handgun "for protection" while out drinking with his brother and friends on Aug. 26 and Aug. 27, 2011, at two to four Lafayette-area bars.

He pulled out the handgun that morning during an argument outside End Zone Sports Bar & Grill, 2408 Veterans Memorial Parkway South — firing one round in the air and a second round into the ground. Gun wadding and debris struck a passerby, 31-year-old Andrew Studer of Lafayette in the chest, knocking him to the ground.

Studer was not seriously injured.

"He responded to his victims like they were insurgents," Moore told Judge Les Meade of Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 on Wednesday afternoon, during what was supposed to be Braman's sentencing hearing.

Braman, 25, pleaded guilty in March to criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon. Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the Class D felony would have been entered as a Class A misdemeanor, and an additional misdemeanor count of carrying a handgun with a license would have been dropped.

"What started as an over-reaction ... evolved into a flashback," Moore said. "When he was running away, he was giving out coordinates while on the phone with his girlfriend."

The judge, however, refused to accept the plea agreement on grounds that it would neither help Braman nor protect the community. A Class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to one year incarceration.

Meade ordered Moore and prosecutors to work out another solution.

"Somebody's out, getting drunk, going from bar to bar to bar, then pulls out a handgun. ... Why should I accept a misdemeanor in this case?" he said.

Deputy Prosecutor Greg Loyd told Meade that he believed the plea agreement was appropriate given his military service and work history. Meade disagreed.

"Unfortunately for Mr. Braman, I'm the only judge in Tippecanoe County who is not too impressed with the sympathy of losing a limb," the judge said. "Things happen; you've got to deal with it."

Meade was critically injured and lost his hand in October 1999 after a car he was in collided with a semitrailer on North River Road in West Lafayette.

He has a prosthetic hand; Braman has a prosthetic leg.

"I'm not telling you you shouldn't have some feeling of loss from losing a limb, but things happen," Meade said.

"I lost more than a limb," Braman replied.

The attack that injured Braman also killed two of his friends, according to Moore. He spent 11 months at a Washington, D.C., hospital for physical therapy.

Today, he struggles with being in large crowds.

"That's why I don't really leave the house. I don't like being in public," Braman told Meade.

The shooting outside End Zone and Braman's arrest occurred the night before a homecoming ceremony and parade in downtown Lafayette to honor his military service. The parade would have coincided with the one-year anniversary of the grenade attack — making "his time in the warzone fresh in his mind," Moore said.

Organizers canceled the parade, but local veterans still held a fish fry to raise money for Braman's family.

Meade told Lloyd and Moore that he has no intention of sending Braman to jail or prison, but he did not believe the one-year maximum supervision allowed for a Class A misdemeanor would suffice. The judge also said misdemeanor treatment would not fit the crime.

"Last time somebody died. We're lucky this time nobody did," Meade said.

In March 2010, Meade rejected a plea agreement offered by prosecutors to William J. Calderon, a Purdue University student who was involved in a prank that killed his best friend, 21-year-old Landon Siela, at an off-campus apartment.

Calderon and his roommate, Cory Lynch, pointed handguns at Siela as a joke. Lynch pulled the trigger, not realizing the gun was loaded, and the bullet struck Siela.

After Meade rejected the plea, Calderon requested a new judge. Both he and Lynch were spared prison time, instead receiving community corrections and probation. Attorneys on both sides are due back in court on May 18.

May 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Sexual misconduct trial under way

A former Lafayette School Corp. board candidate is standing trial this week on accusations that he fondled a teenager in his care.

Michael McShurley, 50, is charged in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with four counts of child molesting and sexual misconduct, all Class C felonies.

The child molesting counts and sexual misconduct count involve separate victims who are related. This week's trial is only for the sexual misconduct allegation.

McShurley was originally arrested on Sept. 1, 2011, after a 12-year-old girl told investigators that McShurley allegedly had been fondling her since she was 9 or 10 years old. Lafayette police then learned about allegations involving her relative, occurring when she was 14 or 15 years old.

Over the past several years, McShurley, a father of six, had been a vocal parent regarding Lafayette School Corp. matters. He unsuccessfully ran for a seat on the school board in 2002.

McShurley spearheaded efforts to create the Broncho Dads program at Jefferson High School, where fathers volunteer to walk the hallways and mentor students.

Testimony began Wednesday and will continue this morning.

May 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Zaragoza's homicide retrial rescheduled

Edward C. Zaragoza will stand trial a second time beginning July 10 on allegations that he killed 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers, of Lafayette, two years ago. It's expected to last three weeks.

Zaragoza's first trial on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit murder and 11 other felonies began on May 1 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. A mistrial was declared six days later after a state's witness told jurors that another witness took a polygraph test.

The witness, Wes Coffey, is Zaragoza's former cousin by marriage. Under court order, Coffey and all other witnesses were not allowed to discuss polygraph examinations during their testimony.

Zaragoza and his wife's cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson, of Reelsville, are suspected of going to Rogers' home at 2200 Ottawa Drive on April 8, 2010, with intentions of stealing a large amount of cash and marijuana from Rogers, a marijuana dealer.

Rogers was found dead that afternoon from a single gunshot wound to his heart.

Thompson's trial date, originally slated to begin May 30, was rescheduled Wednesday to Aug. 7.

May 8, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Zaragoza murder trial must restart after 'legal issue'

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Wesley Coffey's remark Friday afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 about his friend, Clint Laxton, completing a polygraph for police as part of a homicide investigation was just one small mention made during roughly 30 minutes of detailed testimony.

But however brief, that statement was enough for Judge Randy Williams to declare a mistrial Monday morning in 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza's trial on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and 11 other felonies.

Now the trial, which began with jury selection May 1, included three full days of testimony and was expected to last up to three weeks, must be rescheduled. Attorneys plan to meet with Williams on Wednesday morning to choose another date.

Zaragoza, of Mooresville, and his wife's cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, are suspected of killing 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers of Lafayette during a botched robbery for cash and marijuana on April 8, 2010.

Rogers was found dead at his home at 2200 Ottawa Drive with a single gunshot wound to his heart.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said his office, defense attorneys for Zaragoza and Williams met Monday morning to discuss a "legal issue" that occurred Friday afternoon, which led to them agreeing to declare a mistrial. Harrington said he could not elaborate on the exact cause.

Robert Little, one of Zaragoza's court-appointed attorneys, confirmed Monday afternoon that it was due to a comment Coffey made about Laxton, a Lafayette man who admitted during testimony Friday morning that he and Zaragoza previously plotted to take cash and marijuana from Rogers, a marijuana dealer.

That was supposed to take place on April 5, 2010, but Laxton got cold feet and never showed.

Laxton, 20, had to truthfully testify as part of a plea agreement for three business burglaries that he, Coffey and a third man committed in 2009. In exchange, Laxton was spared prison time, and prosecutors agreed not to charge him in connection to Rogers' shooting death.

The 36-year-old Coffey, a Tippecanoe County native who now resides in Arizona, was on the stand Friday afternoon to testify about the same plot, along with conversations he had with Zaragoza and Thompson on the day Rogers was killed.

He, too, testified under immunity from being charged in Rogers' death.

Coffey described having a three-way phone call with Zaragoza and Laxton afterward about "making sure our stories were the same." Shortly after that is when Laxton's polygraph examination came up.

"(Coffey) said something that he could not talk about," Little said, referring to a motion in limine filed by the prosecutor's office before Zaragoza's trial that prohibited certain issues from being brought up in front of jurors.

Little said he could not elaborate, but paperwork that he and defense attorney Steve Meyer filed Monday specifically points to this exchange between Harrington and Coffey while Coffey was on the witness stand:

Harrington: "At some point did Clint Laxton tell you he was giving information to the police?"

Coffey: "No. Clint said he took a polygraph test and passed it, but that's the only thing that —."

Little and Meyer objected, and during a private sidebar with Williams and prosecutors, asked for a mistrial on grounds that Coffey's statement tainted the jury.

The prosecutor's office argued against a mistrial on grounds that witnesses were instructed beforehand and what they could not and could not say. But both Coffey and his attorney told Williams that they could not recall being told this.

Beyond bringing up the polygraph — polygraphs typically are not admissible in court because they're not considered reliable and results can sway jurors — Coffey's statement that Laxton passed it was wrong, according to Little and Meyers' motion for a mistrial that was filed Monday. Laxton actually failed it, they wrote.

Little and Meyer issued the following statement Monday afternoon:

"We are obviously very disappointed about the mistrial, especially given the fact that there was DNA evidence favorable to our client. But in the end, the state agreed with us that its own witness violated a court order prohibiting the mention of certain types of evidence.

"Ironically, that witness' testimony referred to something that was not true. Because of this, our client was prevented from receiving a fair trial.

"The judge had little choice under the law but to grant the mistrial."

The mistrial isn't the first setback in Zaragoza's case. Last fall, the attorney that his family hired, Patrick V. Baker, was suspended from practicing law for misconduct in an unrelated homicide. Zaragoza then asked for public defenders.

Little signed on in December, followed by Meyer in February. At the time, Little already was representing Zaragoza in another burglary case that arose from the homicide investigation.

Jurors last week only heard testimony on eight of the 13 charges against Zaragoza. That's because the five remaining counts — among them, possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon and being a habitual offender — are based on prior convictions. Jurors cannot hear about past convictions during the first phase of a criminal trial.

Thompson currently is scheduled to stand trial beginning May 30, also for up to three weeks. But on Monday afternoon, his attorney filed paperwork asking that it be moved back. Williams has not issued a ruling yet.

May 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Zaragoza murder trial must restart after 'legal issue'

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A new trial will have to be scheduled for a Mooresville man accused of killing 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers.

The Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office and defense attorneys for 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza met today with Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams to discuss a "legal issue" that occurred Friday afternoon, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said. All three parties then agreed that a mistrial should be declared.

Harrington said he could not elaborate. But on Friday, Zaragoza's trial ended at 3 p.m. -- the trial was expected to run through 4:30 p.m., the end of the business day -- during the middle of testimony by Zaragoza's former cousin, Wesley Coffey.

Coffey, of Phoenix, had been on the stand for roughly 30 minutes describing how Zaragoza and 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson went to Rogers' home with plans to rob him of cash and marijuana. Coffey then said they agreed to lie to police because they did not believe there was enough evidence to charge Zaragoza.

That last comment sent attorneys and the judge into a private sidebar, with Williams then stopping the trial early.

A date for Zaragoza's new trial on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and 11 other felonies will be rescheduled Wednesday morning.

Harrington said it's not yet known whether Thompson will still stand trial beginning May 30.

Rogers, a Harrison High School graduate and then-student at Ivy Tech Community College, was found dead on April 8, 2010, at his home at 2200 Ottawa Drive. He died from a single gunshot wound to his heart.

Prosecutors argued that Zaragoza and Thompson were after marijuana and cash that Rogers, a marijuana dealer, stole from his supplier.

May 7, 2012: WLFITV

Update: Mistrial declared in murder case

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, a mistrial was declared Monday morning in the case against 32-year-old Edward Zaragoza.

Zaragoza was on trial for the murder of 21-year-old Kory Rogers. Rogers was found dead in his home on Ottawa Drive in April 2010.

Harrington said a "legal issue" occurred Friday afternoon.

Monday, both parties and the court agreed a "mistrial" should be declared. The court will reconvene Wednesday morning at 9:00 a.m. to schedule a new trial with a new jury.

Zaragoza's defense attorneys, Robert J. Little and Steven P. Meyer, released the following statement Monday afternoon about the decision to declare a mistrial:

"We are obviously very disappointed about the mistrial, especially given the fact that there was DNA evidence favorable to our client. But in the end, the State agreed with us that its own witness violated a court order prohibiting the mentioning of certain types of evidence. Ironically, that witness's testimony referred to something that was not true. Because of this, our client was prevented from receiving a fair trial.

"The judge had little choice under the law but to grant the mistrial."

May 5, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Robbery plan detailed Witnesses say homicide suspect recruited help

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Alex Nugent of Indianapolis thinks it was the first week of April 2010 when he got a phone call from an acquaintance, Edward C. Zaragoza, about taking \$15,000 from a "younger guy" in Lafayette.

Zaragoza never called it a robbery or a burglary, but Nugent suspected the plan — whatever it may be — was criminal in nature, he told a Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 jury on Friday, the fourth day of Zaragoza's trial on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and 11 other felonies.

"He said he'd split it with me," Nugent testified. "I couldn't do it. Had my daughter, had to think about her."

Prosecutors allege that the person Zaragoza, 32, of Mooresville, referenced to Nugent was 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers, a suspected marijuana dealer who was found shot and killed in his home at 2200 Ottawa Drive on April 8, 2010. Nugent, who has known Zaragoza for five or six years, told jurors that Zaragoza then mentioned asking his wife's cousin, Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, to help because Thompson was to be released from jail in a few days. Nugent described Thompson as a good friend of 15 years.

Thompson, 29, faces similar charges when he stands trial beginning May 30

The state's case against Zaragoza and Thompson begins with another burglary on March 17, 2010, during which Rogers and his girlfriend stole \$12,500 and two pounds of marijuana from Rogers' supplier.

Investigators allege that Rogers' best friend, Jordan Wilson, told an acquaintance, Clint Laxton of Lafayette, about the theft and Rogers' cash windfall. Laxton then told his good friend, Wes Coffey, a former Tippecanoe County resident who now lives in Arizona.

Jurors heard from Laxton and Coffey on Friday. Both are key state witnesses.

Coffey, testifying under immunity from being prosecuted for any suspected involvement in Rogers' death, admitted learning from Laxton that Rogers "ripped" someone out of five pounds of marijuana and \$30,000 cash.

That information then got relayed to Zaragoza, Coffey's former cousin by marriage. Coffey was also an acquaintance of Rogers and had been to the Ottawa home twice to buy car parts and smoke pot, he said.

He estimated exchanging a "couple hundred" phone calls with Zaragoza in March and April 2010 about plans that Zaragoza and Laxton had to rob Rogers.

According to prosecutors, that was supposed to take place on April 5, 2010, but Laxton got cold feet and never showed up to meet Zaragoza outside the Marsh Supermarket on Teal Road, just across from Rogers' neighborhood.

Investigators allege that's when Zaragoza called Nugent.

"He just said he wanted to take money from this guy," Nugent testified.

A motel receipt that police found reportedly is proof that Zaragoza and Thompson came to Lafayette on April 7 and spent the night here.

Coffey, who was the last witness to testify Friday, described getting calls beginning at 6 a.m. Arizona time — 9 a.m. Lafayette time — from Zaragoza. In one call, he asked if Coffey knew where Rogers kept his safe, Coffey said.

Zaragoza ended the call by stating " 'the money would be helpful now, might come in handy. I'm sure you'll hear about it later,' " Coffey said.

He further admitted speaking to Zaragoza after his arrest about making sure their cover stories — something to tell police that's 90 percent true and 10 percent a lie, Coffey explained — matched.

Asked by Prosecutor Pat Harrington why they would lie to police, Coffey replied, "We didn't think it was enough evidence for him to be charged."

Coffey is expected to testify again Monday morning, when the trial resumes. The case is slated for two to three weeks.

2 plead guilty in armed robbery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Two Lafayette men have opted not to face a jury next week on allegations they held up a credit union at gunpoint a year ago.

Xxavier Jones, 26, and Christopher A. Whirl, 25, pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony, and theft, a Class D felony.

Whirl is scheduled to be sentenced on May 31 by Judge Thomas Busch; Jones' hearing is June 20.

Neither man had the benefit of signed plea agreements — for instance, reduced charges or shorter potential sentences — with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said.

The robbery took place the morning of May 24 at Purdue Federal Credit Union at 1520 Union St. Both suspects entered and displayed black, semi-automatic handguns.

One of them jumped on the counter, demanding cash. A handgun was placed against an employee's chest.

According to court documents, their getaway vehicle, a dark-colored sport utility vehicle, was found nearby shortly. It was registered to Whirl and Whirl's girlfriend.

The suspects left their cellphones, with snapshots of the handguns they used and one of Jones' pointing a gun at the camera, in the SUV.

May 4, 2012: WLFITV

Woman accused of cashing forged McDonald's check



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman is charged with two felonies, for allegedly trying to cash a forged payroll check from McDonald's.

21-year-old Rickiara Ricki Davis is charged in Tippecanoe County with forgery and attempted theft.

According to court documents, earlier this week, police were called to the Lafayette Bank and Trust branch on Old Highway U.S. 231 South, after bank officials say Davis tried cashing the forged check.

Davis allegedly told police a man gave her the check, along with her Illinois ID card, and told her if she cashed the check for him she could keep \$100 for herself.

Murder trial heads into third day

TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WLFI) - A murder trial heads into its third day in Tippecanoe County.

Thursday, the trial focused on forensic evidence in the case against 32-year-old Edward Zaragoza of Mooresville.

Court documents say Zaragoza and-or Jeremiah Thompson shot and killed 21-year-old Kory Rogers in April 2010.

Friday, a man took the stand who prosecutors say planned to meet up and join in on the robbery back in 2010.

But court records show this man failed to show up on the day of Rogers' murder.

Zaragoza's wife, Shella, was on the stand Friday. She said over the course of Zaragoza being in jail, he made multiple calls to her telling her to tell Thompson to keep quiet about the night of the murder.

Also taking the stand on Friday was Wes Coffey. Coffey said he was the one to tell Zaragoza about the large amount of money and marijuana Rogers had in his possession.

Coffey said he lived in Arizona at the time of the murder. He said since he had been to Rogers house before, Zaragoza called him for information about the house and where Rogers kept his safe.

Detectives said Zaragoza and Thompson were attempting to rob Rogers for a large amount of cash and drugs.

Zaragoza faces several felony charges including murder and burglary.

The trial is expected to last at least two weeks.

It will resume Monday morning.

May 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jurors hear opening testimony in Zaragoza murder trial



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Kory D. Rogers answered his door while armed with an unloaded shotgun the morning that he was shot and killed during a botched drug robbery two years ago.

That was among the information that Tippecanoe County Prosecutor told jurors during opening statements this morning in Edward C. Zaragoza's jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

Zaragoza, 32, of Mooresville, is charged with felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and nine other felonies in Rogers' April 8, 2010, shooting death.

He's accused of conspiring with his wife's cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson of Reelsville, to steal \$12,000 cash and two pounds of marijuana that Rogers took from his marijuana dealer on March 15, 2010.

The case against them has largely been pieced together through information from various acquaintances of Zaragoza, along with cellphone records that show Zaragoza's iPhone "pinging" cell towers from Rogers' home at 2200 Ottawa Drive the morning of the shooting.

Though shell casings were recovered, they contain no fingerprints or DNA evidence, Harrington told jurors.

That conflicts with opening statements by Zaragoza's attorney, Robert Little, who told jurors that they will hear DNA evidence specifically excludes Zaragoza.

He told jurors that the approximately 30 witnesses the state plans to call are "jail snitches and crooks and liars."

Little urged jurors to compare the case to Santa Claus -- watch for the details that don't add up.

He told them to "Be the 11-year-old who's asking questions," he said.

Zaragoza's trial is expected to last three weeks. The state's first witness, Rogers' sister, Katie Rogers, took the stand this morning and described coming home to her brother's body at the bottom of the stairs, with blood around his head.

May 2, 2012: WLFITV

Murder victim's sister testifies in trial

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A trial is underway for a man accused of killing a 21-year-old Lafayette man in his home.

32-year-old Edward Zaragoza of Mooresville faces several felony charges including murder, conspiracy to commit robbery, burglary, and attempted theft.

Court documents say in April 2010, Zaragoza and-or Jeremiah Thompson shot and killed Kory Rogers.

The two men were attempting to rob Rogers for a large amount of cash and marijuana.

Rogers was found dead inside his Lafayette home at 2200 Ottawa Drive.

Defense Attorney Robert Little and Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington made their opening statements Wednesday morning, then witnesses began to take the stand.

Among those witnesses was Katie Rogers, Kory's sister, who testified she lived with Kory at the time of the murder.

She said she came home about 1:30 p.m. on April 8, 2010 to find Kory's body and Kory's girlfriend on the phone with 911 dispatchers.

She said she took the phone and finished the call to dispatchers.

Kory's girlfriend at the time, Tiffany Foster Campbell, took the stand next.

In her testimony, she admitted she and Kory took part in a burglary a month before his murder.

A friend of Kory, Zach Loft, told NewsChannel 18 Rogers always said he was going to shock the world someday, so it came as a shock to family and friends when he was murdered.

"I never thought being 25-years-old, I would have a friend murdered and I never thought I'd be to a trial like this. It's something you don't plan on. It's something you don't think about. It's just....it's devastating," said Loft.

Wednesday in court, the jurors heard the 911 call made by Tiffany Foster Campbell and Katie Rogers.

They were also shown a picture of Kory's body from the crime scene.

May 2, 2012: WLFITV

Murder trial begins Wednesday

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Wednesday morning both the defense attorney and Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington made their opening statements regarding the murder trial set to begin Wednesday.

Jury selection was underway Tuesday for a murder trial that's expected to last more than two weeks.

The first witness to take the stand was Katie Rogers, the victim Kory Roger's sister.

So far, Katie has said she came home to her residence the day of his murder. Katie owned the home and Kory paid rent to live in her basement.

She said she found Kory's girlfriend on the phone with 911 dispatchers and that she took over the phone call because Kory's girlfriend was hysterical.

Kory's girlfriend at the time, Tiffany Foster Campbell, also took the stand. In her testimony, she admitted that she and Kory took part in a burglary a month before his murder.

32-year-old Edward Zaragoza will be tried for several felony charges, including murder, burglary, attempted robbery and attempted theft.

Opening arguments in the case began Wednesday morning, followed by testimony from witnesses over a period of two to three weeks.

Court documents say in April of 2010, Zaragoza and/or Jeremiah Thompson killed Kory Rogers, while attempting to steal from him at a home on Ottawa Drive in Lafayette.

Rogers was found dead of a gunshot wound.

Zach Loft was a friend of Kory Rodgers. He was at the trial Wednesday. Loft said Rodgers always said he was going to shock the world someday, so it came as a shock to family and friends when he was murdered.

"I know his parents are torn up inside. You know, they've got to sit here and listen through all this. Just hopefully justice can be served and in the right way," said Loft.

Wednesday in court, the jurors heard the 911 call made by Tiffany Foster Campbell and Katie Rodgers. They were also shown a picture of Kory Rodgers' body from the crime scene.

Loft said it was hard for friends and family to hear and see those two pieces of evidence. But he said it's what has to be done so that justice can be served.

The trial will continue Thursday morning.

May 1, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Testimony begins today in Zaragoza murder trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Testimony will begin today in the trial of a central Indiana man accused of killing 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers during a botched robbery two years ago on Lafayette's south end.

Edward C. Zaragoza, 32, of Mooresville, is charged with felony murder, murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and nine other felonies in Rogers' April 8, 2010, shooting death.

Attorneys spent all day Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 selecting the 12-member jury, plus two alternates. Zaragoza's trial is expected to last three weeks — the longest jury trial in Tippecanoe County in recent memory.

Zaragoza and his wife's cousin, 29-year-old Jeremiah Thompson, of Reelsville, were indicted in January 2011 in Rogers' death following a grand jury investigation.

Because the charges were decided by a grand jury, rather than the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, no supplemental probable cause affidavit was filed. That document would have detailed how Zaragoza and Thompson became suspects. The grand jury proceedings are closed to the public, and the transcripts are sealed.

But information from other criminal cases against Zaragoza help fill in some holes:

Rogers was found dead from a gunshot wound at his home in the 2200 block of Ottawa Drive, near South 18th Street and Teal Road. He was a student at Ivy Tech Community College and a Harrison High School graduate.

Ten days later, Zaragoza, who originally is from Tippecanoe County, was charged with conspiring with two other men — Clint J. Laxton, of Lafayette, and Wesley H. Coffey, of Avondale, Ariz. — to rob Rogers on April 5, 2010. They were reportedly after \$12,000 cash and marijuana that Rogers had taken from a drug dealer.

That alleged scheme was not carried out on April 5.

Zaragoza is suspected of then recruiting Thompson because Laxton backed out. Laxton and Coffey are among the witnesses that the state could call to testify, according to transport orders and state discovery disclosures filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

In numerous letters that Zaragoza has penned to Judge Randy Williams while being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail for the past two years, Zaragoza has repeatedly denied killing Rogers. He did admit to being in Lafayette on April 8, 2010, but it only was to "load stuff from my mom's house," he claimed.

Zaragoza is being represented by two court-appointed attorneys, Robert Little and Steve Meyer. Last week, they filed motions to dismiss the charges, partially on grounds that Zaragoza's DNA was not found on bullet shell casings located at the crime scene.

Little and Meyer also argued that the information was not presented to the grand jury that indicted Zaragoza. The judge, however, dismissed their motions.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington and a team of deputy prosecutors are expected to present the case for the state.

Thompson's trial on similar charges is scheduled to begin May 30. That trial also is expected to last three weeks.

April 30, 2012: WLFITV

Men charged for motel meth lab



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - Two Frankfort men are now facing multiple felony charges, after police say they were found making methamphetamine at a Lafayette motel.

33-year-old Pedro Villarreal and 20-year-old Ty Wilkerson were charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court II with conspiracy to commit dealing methamphetamine, dealing methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine and having an illegal drug lab. Wilkerson faces an additional charge of maintaining a common nuisance.

Court documents say Lafayette police were checking the area around the Knights Inn Motel last Monday, when they noticed a door opening and closing, but no one leaving the motel room.

Officer O'Shields spoke with Wilkerson when he left the motel room, who said "Pete" was inside and gave the officer a key card to the room.

When O'Shields knocked on the door, Villarreal allegedly slammed the door in his face. The second time he knocked, documents say Villarreal stepped outside.

After Villarreal was allegedly being uncooperative, O'Shields used the key card to open the door to the motel room, where he could see four plastic bottles on heaters, that appeared to be boiling or cooking.

Police obtained a search warrant for the room and the Indiana State Police clandestine lab team confirmed the bottles were an active methamphetamine lab. Investigators also identified several substances in the room that are commonly used to make meth.

Documents say Officer O'Shields spoke with both Villarreal and Wilkerson on Friday. Villarreal claimed he had been asleep, and woke up to find Wilkerson had set up the bottles on light strips.

However, Wilkerson told O'Shields that he had taken his girlfriend to work, then took a shower, and then found Villarreal had set up the bottles in the room.

April 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Guilty verdicts in killing WL man convicted of all counts in 2011 slaying



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr. was set up to be robbed the night of July 28, 2011, when he was found dead from a gunshot wound in the hallway of a south Lafayette apartment building, a jury has concluded.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury deliberated for more than four hours Saturday before finding 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche, a West Lafayette man who admitted to dealing drugs with Smith before, guilty of all charges against him: murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

Porche, along with 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster of Lafayette and 22-year-old Kevin K. Williams of Lafayette, were accused of luring Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail that evening with promises of having a handgun to sell him.

But the group of friends, who spent the day hanging out, driving around and smoking marijuana, intended to rob Smith from the get-go, the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office argued.

Meanwhile, Porche's attorney, Kirk Freeman, argued that Foster all along planned to shoot Smith for payback. Smith previously shot into the home of one of Foster's relatives, and the crime was never reported to police, Porche told Lafayette police in recorded statements that were played for jurors.

Because Foster already admitted to shooting Smith and pleaded guilty to murder, the outcome of Porche's trial hinged on whether jurors believed a robbery took place. That would meet Indiana's definition for felony murder, which is when someone dies during the commission of another felony crime.

Porche's trial began Tuesday afternoon.

Among the witnesses who testified for the state was Ashlyn Bryant, one of Foster's friends. On July 28, Foster and Porche spent part of the day at Bryant's Lafayette apartment, during which time Bryant said she discussed with them "hitting a lick."

That is slang for committing a robbery, Bryant said.

But when pressed by Freeman if it meant anything else, she replied, "dealing drugs."

Jurors also heard this past week from the store clerk where Smith purchased a bottle of tequila shortly before his death. Smith pulled out a large wad of cash, and a similar large wad of cash -- \$300 in total -- was found in a driveway on Third Street near downtown, where Williams parked his car before the suspects ran on foot.

Jurors spent Thursday watching recorded interviews between Porche and Lafayette police detectives. On Saturday, those detectives took the stand.

Though Porche was repeatedly adamant that he and Williams did not know Foster planned to shoot Smith -- "I'm telling you people the truth, the real truth!" he claimed, followed by "I have \$500, \$600. I don't need to rob Baybay!" -- testimony from bystanders and evidence contradicted that.

For instance, cellphone records shows that Smith and Porche exchanged 12 calls on July 28. Porche claimed that calls were made by Foster, who borrowed his phone.

Witnesses also reported seeing two people run out a back entrance at 1840 Summertime Trail, despite Porche's assertion that he left through the front entrance and got in Williams' waiting vehicle.

Only Smith, Foster and Porche were in the hallway when Smith was shot. When asked by Detective Joe Clyde why, if Porche was truly worried about Smith and scared of Foster, he didn't call 911, Porche replied: "The cop was right there."

Porche led police to a recycling bin between two houses on nearby Equinox Terrace, where the gun used to kill Smith was found. Foster had been crouching down in that area, he said.

Foster is currently serving a 50-year prison sentence for his role. Williams is scheduled to stand trial in June.

April 28, 2012: WLFITV

UPDATE: Man found guilty of murder

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFITV) - The verdict is in for a Lafayette man accused of murder.

Day five of the trial of Dartanyan Porche ended just before 6:00 p.m. Saturday with a verdict being reached.

A jury found Porche guilty for the murder of 26-year-old Clarence Smith, Jr. He was also found guilty of conspiracy to commit robbery and attempted robbery.

Testimony and closing statements wrapped up Saturday morning, and the case was handed off to the jury around 1:00 p.m. The jury is still deliberating at this time.

Investigators said Porche, along with Michael Anthony Foster II and Kevin Williams, were going to rob Smith. When the robbery didn't go as planned and Smith didn't cooperate, he was shot and killed.

In court this week, Foster admitted to shooting Smith. His statement matched Porche's original statement to police that Foster was the one to fire the gun.

Foster has already been sentenced to 50 years in prison and five years of supervised probation.

April 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Homicide trial expected to finish today

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche's explanation to detectives about what happened when drug acquaintance Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr. was killed at a south Lafayette apartment went from outright denial to finally admitting that he witnessed the shooting, according to videotaped interviews played for jurors Friday.

But the 24-year-old West Lafayette man was repeatedly adamant that he, 22-year-old Kevin K. "Smiles" Williams and 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster, both of Lafayette, never conspired to set up a fake handgun sale and rob Smith, 24, as Tippecanoe County prosecutors allege.

That's important because if jurors conclude the slaying was part of a robbery attempt, they could convict Porche of felony murder.

Foster, who pleaded guilty in March to murder, already has admitted that he shot Smith because Smith wouldn't cooperate in the alleged holdup. He's serving a 50-year prison sentence.

Jurors on Friday, the fourth day of Porche's trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery, watched videotaped interviews of Porche that were made by the Lafayette Police Department on July 29, 2011, the day after the killing.

They included a three-hour session between Porche and Detective Cecil Johnson, Detective Joe Clyde and Sgt. Eric Wallace. Jurors also watched a shorter statement that Porche gave to Lt. Tom Davidson.

In them, Porche claimed that he and Williams did not know Foster's intentions that evening. Foster did not like Smith because Smith had previously shot into the home of his relative, Porche said.

"Me and Smiles - we don't know nothing about no robbery," Porche told Davidson. "If me and you was going to rob the guy next door, we'd plan it out. We'd plan it out.

" ... This is making me sick to my stomach."

Smith, Porche and Foster were standing in the first-floor hallway of 1840 Summertime Trail when Foster pulled out a silver handgun. Porche described seeing Foster extend his arm, fire one "pop" and take off running through a back entrance. Porche said he and Williams, who was waiting in his car parked outside the building, were baffled by what Foster did. He claimed that they drove away from Summertime Trail and happened to see Foster crouched between two homes on nearby Equinox Terrace. Foster then jumped into the front passenger seat.

They asked Foster, "What the (expletive) you on man? What the (expletive) did you do?" Porche told Davidson.

He also claimed to be frightened of Foster and called him "crazy."

Porche's statements, however, do not match that of witnesses who reported seeing two men run through a back entrance shortly after Smith was shot.

Smith was driven to Summertime Trail that night by a female friend and her female friend. They told investigators that two people - later determined to be Williams and Foster's 15-year-old cousin - were in Williams' blue Ford Crown Victoria parked outside.

Police and investigators allege that Foster, Porche and Williams were out to "hit a lick" - slang for committing a robbery to get fast cash - that night and lured Smith to the apartment building. None of them resided there.

The evidence recovered also indicates that the trio intended to rob Smith, Davidson told Porche.

In the hours before Smith was killed, he had purchased a bottle of tequila and pulled the money from a large wad of cash. A similar wad of cash - \$300 in all, according to Davidson - was found in the driveway where Williams ditched his Crown Victoria.

Davidson asked Porche why he never helped Smith and instead helped Foster get away from the crime scene. His response?

"If I'm being charged, I'm going to fight. I'm going to trial," Porche said.

When asked by police why he accompanied Foster that evening, he never gave an explanation.

Testimony will continue this morning. Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey and Deputy Prosecutor Donna Frank are presenting the case for the state.

Porche is represented by Kirk Freeman, who is arguing that Porche was used as bait by Foster.

Jurors are expected to have the case by early afternoon.

April 27, 2012: WLFITV

Jurors hear original police statement in day four of Porche's murder trial

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - A Lafayette man's murder trial is getting closer to wrapping up in its fourth day Friday.

Dartanyan Porsche is on trial for the murder of 26-year-old Clarence Smith.

Witnesses continued to take the stand Friday. Among those witnesses was a Lafayette Police Department detective. During his testimony, a 3-hour-long video was played of Porche's original statement to the police.

In Porche's statement, he denied ever seeing Smith on the night of July 28th when the murder took place. Later on in his statement, Porche admitted to seeing Michael Anthony Foster shoot Smith.

Investigators said the two men, along with Kevin Williams of Lafayette, were trying to rob Smith. When the robbery didn't go as planned and Smith didn't cooperate, he was shot and killed.

Foster has already been sentenced to 50 years in prison and 5 year on supervised probation.

April 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Porche's trial will continue Saturday morning.

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The trial for a West Lafayette man charged with murder in the shooting death last summer of Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr. will likely go into Saturday.

Jurors today have been watching videotaped interviews between Lafayette police and 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche.

Porche claimed that he had no clue his co-defendant Michael Anthony "C4" Foster, 22, planned to shoot Smith.

He further denied claims that their meeting with Smith on July 28, 2011, in an apartment building on Summertime Trail was a planned robbery, as the prosecutor's office alleges.

As of 4 p.m. today, the state was still presenting evidence in the case.

Porche's attorney, Kirk Freeman, is arguing that Foster killed Smith for revenge because Smith had shot a relative of Foster's some time ago.

April 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jurors shown photos of victim in murder trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Jurors viewed graphic photos Thursday of the gunshot wound to Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr.'s abdomen that caused him to bleed to death last summer in the hallway of a Lafayette apartment building.

The images were presented during the third day of 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche's trial on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

The West Lafayette man and two friends, 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster, of Lafayette, and 22-year-old Kevin K. "Smiles" Williams, of Lafayette, are accused of luring Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail on July 28, 2011, on the promise of having a gun to sell him.

Prosecutors allege that the trio planned from the beginning to rob Smith, who had dealt drugs with Porche before. Shooting Smith was never part of the original plan, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said.

If the jurors conclude the slaying was part of a robbery attempt, they could convict Porche of felony murder.

Porche's attorney, Kirk Freeman, is arguing that Foster killed Smith for revenge. Smith had reportedly shot a relative of Foster's some time ago.

Foster pleaded guilty in March and was sentenced to 50 years in prison. Williams is set to stand trial in June.

Among the witnesses who testified Thursday was Dr. Alan Griggs, a pathologist who performed Smith's autopsy. Griggs said Smith died from a close-contact gunshot wound -- fired from a pistol "21/2 inches to 2 feet" away.

The bullet penetrated several of Smith's organs, struck his ribs and severed his aorta. He died within minutes.

Jurors also heard from police officers and detectives who responded to the shooting.

It occurred in an apartment building off South 18th Street, near another apartment building where Porche and his two friends had been hanging out that day and evening.

Porche and Foster were in the hallway with Smith, while Williams sat in his vehicle outside -- backed into a parking space so they could make a quick exit, McVey said.

After Smith was shot, prosecutors allege that Porche and Foster ran out a back exit, through a grassy area behind the building and onto nearby Equinox Terrace, where Williams picked them up.

Detective Grant Snyder found the gun that investigators suspect was used to shoot Smith in a recycling bin on that street.

Testimony will resume this morning. The trial is expected to wrap up this afternoon, though deliberations could run into Saturday.

April 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder trial continues to focus on whether victim was robbed

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Testimony continued Wednesday in the trial of a West Lafayette man accused of arranging a fake handgun sale that ended with his acquaintance shot and left to die in the hallway of a south Lafayette apartment building.

Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche, 24, was one of three men charged with murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery in the July 28, 2011, death of 24-year-old Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr.

Porche is on trial through at least Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Prosecutors are trying to convince jurors that Porche purposely set up Smith, a man whom he previously dealt drugs with, so that he, 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster, of Lafayette, and 22-year-old Kevin K. "Smiles" Williams, of Lafayette, could rob him.

Porche's attorney, Kirk Freeman, is arguing that Foster shot Smith as revenge for a prior shooting in which Smith was the triggerman.

By pretending to have a handgun to sell Smith, that essentially guaranteed that Smith would show up with cash, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey said. The botched holdup took place at 1840 Summertime Trail, an apartment building near where Porche and his co-defendants had been hanging out most of the day.

An inventory of items found on Smith afterward turned up roughly \$2.50 in change but "no wad of cash. No gun. No drugs," she said.

Smith, however, did have a large wad of cash on him when he purchased a bottle of tequila earlier that evening, according to information presented to jurors.

And a similar large wad of cash was found in the driveway of the home where Williams, the accused getaway driver, parked his car before the suspects fled on foot.

Williams is slated to stand trial in June.

Foster pleaded guilty in March to murder and was sentenced to 50 years in prison. As part of his plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, Foster was required to testify at Porche's trial, and jurors heard from him on Wednesday.

He admitted being the shooter and claimed he did it only because Smith would not cooperate in the robbery.

According to McVey, Smith, after realizing the handgun sale was a setup, said to Porche, "This is how you're going to do me?"

The alleged robbery is a key component of Porche's trial. Proving that Porche conspired to rob Smith would meet Indiana's definition of felony murder.

"In order to save Michael Foster, Michael Foster is turning this into something it wasn't," Freeman told jurors.

April 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man charged with attacking police officers at hospital

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is accused of attacking and trying to take a gun and other weapons from police officers who responded to a call that a suicidal man was trying to flee a hospital emergency room.

The man, 39-year-old Jeffrey J. Miller, was charged Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with disarming a law enforcement officer, a Class C felony; two counts of battery on a law enforcement officer, a Class D felony; and resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor.

He was being held Wednesday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$10,000 surety bond.

Miller's arrest the night of April 20 came when staff at St. Elizabeth Central were preparing to place him under emergency detention, and Miller tried to leave the hospital. It's unclear why he was initially taken to the emergency room.

According to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges, Lafayette police arrived and confronted Miller just outside the patient entrance of the hospital. That's when Miller allegedly picked up a parking sign with a concrete base and yelled "Do you want to go?"

Police also say Miller approached an emergency medical technician with his "fists clenched and chest puffed out" and asked if the EMT wanted to fight.

A second police officer tried to use a stun-gun device to subdue Miller, but it wasn't effective. Miller allegedly began swinging his fists and struck that officer in the face.

The two officers eventually tackled Miller to the ground. That's when, according to the affidavit, Miller tried to grab one officer's gun, tore off the officer's vest and ripped the flap off the carrier that holds the officer's baton.

An EMT who happened to be at the scene and another arriving officer stepped in and helped handcuff Miller.

April 26, 2012: WLFITV

Man charged with battering police officers

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A Lafayette man is charged after police say he attacked officers outside Franciscan Saint Elizabeth Central.

According to court documents, hospital employees were admitting Jeffrey Jay Miller, 39, on an emergency detention order April 20.

Hospital staff said Miller got upset and walked out.

When police confronted Miller, they said they got into a struggle and had to tackle him to the pavement. Investigators said Miller was grabbing at an officer's belt near his gun when he was finally restrained by other officers and a medic on the scene.

Miller faces three felony charges, including two counts of battery on a law enforcement officer.

April 25, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial in homicide may hinge on motive

The West Lafayette man is one of three suspects who were charged with murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery.

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Was 24-year-old Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr. fatally shot during a botched robbery attempt, or did his admitted killer lure him to a south Lafayette apartment complex the night of July 28, 2011, for revenge?

That will be up to a Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury this week to decide.

Jurors began hearing testimony Tuesday afternoon in 24-year-old Dartanyan D. "BJ" Porche's trial. The West Lafayette man is one of three suspects who were charged with murder, conspiracy to commit robbery and robbery in Smith's death.

One of his co-defendants, 22-year-old Michael Anthony "C4" Foster of Lafayette, pleaded guilty in March to murder, admitting that he pulled the trigger and killed Smith. Foster was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

The third co-defendant and suspected getaway driver, 22-year-old Kevin K. "Smiles" Williams of Lafayette, is scheduled to stand trial in June.

During opening statements, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey told jurors that Porche is the one suspected of luring Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail that night. Phone records show that Smith and Porche exchanged numerous calls.

The three suspects had planned to "hit a lick" -- slang for committing a robbery -- because they needed money, McVey said.

Smith became their alleged target after he called Porche -- the two had dealt drugs together, McVey said -- to ask where he could buy a gun.

"They were out to 'hit a lick' ... the lick went bad, and they shot a man," McVey said.

One of the state's key witnesses will be Foster, who said during his guilty plea and subsequent cleanup statement to investigators that Smith was shot after refusing to hand over his money.

The bullet penetrated several organs, struck one of Smith's ribs and severed his aorta, McVey said.

Foster is required to truthfully testify as part of his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Because Foster already admitted to shooting Smith, in order to convict Porche of murder, McVey must convince jurors that Porche and his co-defendants conspired beforehand to rob Smith. That would meet Indiana's definition of felony murder.

Porche's attorney, Kirk Freeman, is focusing his defense on attacking that portion of the state's case.

"This was a murder, but we know who did the murder," Freeman told jurors during his opening statement. "The state wants you to think it was a robbery. ... This was a revenge killing."

He said Smith had previously shot "someone close to" Foster, and that Foster killed him as payback. Porche and Williams were simply "bait" for that plan, Freeman is arguing.

Smith's family previously told the Journal & Courier that they, too, believed Smith was killed for shooting a relative of Foster's in the foot a few years ago. Lafayette police previously confirmed that investigators looked into the claim, but believe that the shooting was never reported.

Smith had been involved in an altercation with Foster and Williams before, in February 2011, at a West Lafayette bar. Smith, however, declined to press charges and walked away from officers when they responded to the call.

Jurors heard Tuesday afternoon from one witness, a friend of Foster's who took him to buy a gun on the day before Smith was shot. Testimony will resume this morning.

April 25, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue associate dean pleads in Walmart theft

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Former Purdue University associate dean Robert P. "Pablo" Malavenda has admitted to stealing pumpkins, light bulbs, smoke alarms and other household items from a local Walmart last October -- a petty crime that ultimately cost him his job.

Malavenda, 50, of West Lafayette, pleaded guilty Tuesday afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to theft, a Class D felony. Judge Les Meade scheduled his sentencing hearing for May 23.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, a misdemeanor count of conversion will be dropped. The plea leaves the length of Malavenda's sentence -- a Class D felony is punishable by six months to three years in prison -- up to Meade.

The charges against him stem from events on Oct. 8, 2011, when Malavenda was caught on surveillance cameras at the Walmart Supercenter in West Lafayette returning \$160.17 worth of items that he did not actually purchase.

In court Tuesday, Malavenda said he went into Walmart and legitimately purchased household goods. He paid at one of the self-checkout lanes.

However, Malavenda admitted that he walked back into the store with his receipt and empty, reusable shopping bags. He then grabbed the same goods he just bought, placed them in the reusable shopping bags and presented the receipt from the legitimate transaction to a Walmart employee after security alarms went off.

Malavenda again left the store -- only to enter through another entrance to return the stolen loot at the customer service desk for a refund.

Meade pressed Malavenda to clarify what happened. "I'm not sure I understand that," the judge said.

"I returned one set of items ... but still had the property," Malavenda quietly replied.

Purdue fired Malavenda shortly after his arrest.

As associate dean, Malavenda oversaw more than 690 student activities and organizations on the West Lafayette campus. His duties included handing down discipline for student groups that violated university policies.

April 25, 2012: WLFITV

Trial underway for Lafayette murder suspect

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The trial is underway for a suspect involved in a Lafayette murder.

24-year-old Dartanyan Porche is charged with five felonies including murder and robbery for the death of 26-year-old Clarence Smith Junior last July.

Court documents say two other men are also involved in the case which started last July when the three men allegedly had an arrangement to sell marijuana to Smith.

22-year-old Michael Anthony Foster the Second testified Wednesday morning.

In his testimony he said he was the one to shoot Smith and that Porche was with him and was going to sell Smith a gun.

The arrangement turned into a robbery.

Part of Foster's plea agreement was that he would testify Wednesday.

Prosecutors said they are working hard to return a verdict by the end of the week. Prosecuting Attorney Kristen McVey said it will take several witnesses to give the jury a better idea of what happened that night.

"We've had five or six witnesses testify and we expect about 2 dozen more," said McVey.

McVey said prosecutors hope to wrap up the trial by Friday.

"We like to avoid having to go to trial on weekends. It's an inconvenience for the court staff and courthouse security issues so we hope to avoid having to do that," said McVey.

April 24, 2012: WLFITV

Lafayette murder suspect trial starts



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A Lafayette murder suspect will learn his fate in the coming days.

A jury trial is set to begin Wednesday morning for 24-year-old Dartanyan Porche.

Attorneys and prosecutors spent the day Tuesday selecting the jury.

Porche is charged with five felonies, including murder and robbery, for the death of 26-year-old Clarence Smith, Junior last July.

Police found Clarence W. Smith in the foyer of an apartment at Bristol Woods on Summertime Trail on Lafayette's south side around 9:30 p.m.

Court documents say 22-year-old Michael Foster the Second told police Porche was arranging a marijuana deal with Smith.

But 22-year-old Kevin Williams allegedly said Porche was going to sell Smith a gun.

The arrangement turned into a robbery that ended with Smith being shot.

Porche's jury trial is expected to last four to six days.

April 24, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Apparent overdose leads to heroin dealing charges

An apparent drug overdose a week ago near Columbian Park in Lafayette has led to criminal charges against a suspected heroin dealer.

Richard J. Dixon, 53, of Lafayette, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with dealing in a narcotic drug, a Class A felony; possession of a narcotic drug, a Class A felony; maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony; and possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor.

He's also accused of being a habitual substance offender, which could add three to eight years onto his prison sentence, if convicted.

Dixon was being held Monday night in the Tippecanoe County Jail without bond, jail staff said.

His arrest came after someone called the Lafayette Police Department shortly after midnight on April 17 to complain about possible drug activity at 712 S. 27th St. -- Dixon's home address.

April 24, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bank robbery plea entered

A Plainfield man faces six to 20 years in prison after admitting that he held up a Lafayette bank last August while armed with a knife.

Joshua P. Hendrix, 31, who pleaded guilty Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to all charges against him, is scheduled to be sentenced May 15 by Judge Thomas Busch.

The charges are: two counts of robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony; two counts of criminal confinement while armed with a deadly weapon, a Class B felony; and theft, a Class D felony.

Hendrix did not sign a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

The charges stem from a holdup on Aug. 25 at Salin Bank, 330 N. Creasy Lane. The suspect displayed a knife, demanded cash and commented that "everyone wanted to go home that night." No one was injured.

The suspect fled on foot, but Hendrix was arrested a week later, shortly after police released photos of the robber.

According to court documents, an acquaintance told investigators that she unknowingly drove Hendrix to a nearby business on Aug. 25 and waited for him in the parking lot. She did not know he had committed a bank robbery.

Hendrix is in the Putnamville Correctional Facility serving time on convictions out of Marion County for resisting law enforcement and battery on a law enforcement officer.

Those charges stem from Hendrix trying to flee after Lafayette and Indianapolis police and an FBI task force tracked him to a home in Indianapolis.

April 24, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue official pleads in Walmart theft

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Former Purdue University associate dean Robert P. "Pablo" Malavenda has admitted to stealing pumpkins, light bulbs, smoke alarms and other household items from a local Walmart last October - a petty crime that ultimately cost him his job.

Malavenda, 50, of West Lafayette, pleaded guilty this afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to theft, a Class D felony. Judge Les Meade scheduled his sentencing hearing for May 23.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, a misdemeanor count of conversion will be dropped. The plea leaves the length of Malavenda's sentence - a Class D felony is punishable by six months to three years in prison - up to Meade.

The charges against him stem from events on Oct. 8, 2011, when Malavenda was caught on surveillance cameras at the Walmart Supercenter in West Lafayette returning \$160.17 worth of items that he did not actually purchase.

In court today, Malavenda said he went into Walmart and legitimately purchased household goods. He paid at one of the self-checkout lanes.

However, Malavenda admitted that he walked back into the store with his receipt and empty, reusable shopping bags. He then grabbed the same goods he just bought, placed them in the reusable shopping bags and presented the receipt from the legitimate transaction to a Walmart employee after security alarms went off.

Malavenda again left the store - only to enter through another entrance to return the stolen loot at the customer service desk for a refund.

Meade pressed Malavenda to clarify what happened. "I'm not sure I understand that," the judge said.

"I returned one set of items ... but still had the property," Malavenda quietly replied.

Purdue fired Malavenda shortly after his arrest.

As associate dean, Malavenda oversaw more than 690 student activities and organizations on the West Lafayette campus, including fraternities, sororities and independent housing units. His duties included handing down discipline for student groups that violated university policies.

April 24, 2012: WLFITV

Former Purdue associate dean pleads guilty to theft

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former Purdue associate dean pleads guilty to one count of theft.

Robert Pablo Malavenda had faced a felony charge of theft and a misdemeanor charge of conversion.

As he left court, Malavenda was silent as he walked to the probation office.

Police arrested him at the West Lafayette Walmart last October.

According to a Wal-mart Asset Protection Associate, Malavenda entered the store and purchased several items in three different transactions. Then he exited the store.

Malavenda re-entered the store without the purchased items but with the receipts from those items.

He selected the same items he purchased previously and passed all registers without purchased those items.

Later that month, he was fired from his job as associate dean of students for student activities and organizations.

He is due back in court for sentencing on May 23.

April 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Arrested Battle Ground man tied to break-ins, thefts, police say

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Battle Ground man has been linked to a series of residential break-ins and thefts in Tippecanoe County that occurred in late March and early April.

Nathan R. Wilbanks, 24, has been in the Tippecanoe County Jail since his arrest Monday. He was charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 with three counts of burglary, two counts of theft and one count each of auto theft and residential entry.

All seven counts are felonies.

As of Thursday night, Wilbanks was being held on a combined \$12,500 surety and \$1,250 cash bond.

It's unclear from court documents how Wilbanks was initially identified as a suspect. But when interviewed by Lafayette police on Tuesday, he allegedly provided incriminating statements.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Wilbanks is suspected of stealing a Suzuki motorcycle, a leather jacket and a helmet from a home on Eastwich Drive in Lafayette on March 30. The overhead garage door had been left partially open.

The next day, sheriff's deputies spotted someone riding the stolen motorcycle near county roads 75 East and 800 North, but the rider ditched the motorcycle and fled on foot.

Wilbanks also is suspected of breaking into a home on Greenwich Road in Lafayette on March 30, reportedly by removing the screen from a window that the tenant admitted to leaving cracked open. Nothing was taken, though items inside had been moved around or rummaged through.

Another Greenwich Road burglary occurred on April 1. That tenant admitted to leaving his back door unlocked. His driver's license and two credit cards were missing from his wallet.

April 19, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette shooting suspect found guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces up to 73 years in prison for allegations that he shot into his ex-girlfriend's vehicle while she and a male friend were parked outside a motel.

The Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury deliberated for about two hours Wednesday afternoon and evening before finding 47-year-old Rickie B. Gilliam guilty of 13 felonies, including felony counts of attempted murder, attempted aggravated battery, criminal recklessness and dealing marijuana.

Gilliam then pleaded guilty to an elevated charge of being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm. Jurors were not given that count during deliberations because a defendant's criminal history cannot be presented during the first phase of a trial.

He'll be sentenced in May by Judge Thomas Busch.

On Jan. 15, 2011, Heather B. Short and a male friend were in her vehicle outside of Economy Inn, 2200 Sagamore Parkway N. in Lafayette, when another vehicle pulled up.

According to trial testimony, Short told dispatchers in a 911 call that Gilliam fired numerous gunshots into the car. At one point, he stopped shooting, kicked the vehicle, then fired again.

Neither Short or her friend were injured.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Gilliam and Short dated. The week before the shooting, they broke up, and he kicked her out of his home.

Lafayette police -- including a SWAT team -- went to Gilliam's home at 920 N. 23rd St., but he was not home. Officers, however, had a search warrant and were able to get inside.

The dealing marijuana charge was based on roughly three pounds of marijuana found in Gilliam's house. Investigators also recovered scales, reportedly used to weigh the pot for resale, and ammunition, they testified this week.

Gilliam faces 20 to 50 years for the attempted murder count alone, along with six to 20 years for the firearms charge and six months to three years for dealing marijuana.

April 19, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Decades in prison given for drugs, neglect

A West Lafayette man faces 20 to 58 years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday of dealing cocaine, child neglect and other offenses

The suspect, 29-year-old Dandre C. Matlock, was arrested on Aug. 11, 2011, after police showed up at his home at 3327 Edison Drive in search of another person.

While there, officers saw Matlock speaking to a man holding the corner of a plastic bag that was filled with a white, powdery substance, Prosecutor Pat Harrington said.

Matlock refused to answer the door, but investigators were able to get a search warrant.

According to Harrington, police found trace amounts of marijuana in grinders; 119 grams of cocaine in a hard, brick-like form that has a minimum value of \$12,000; and three firearms, two of which had been reported as stolen during a 2009 burglary.

Following a two-day trial that ended Wednesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court, jurors found Matlock guilty of dealing cocaine, a Class A felony; possession of cocaine, a Class C felony; maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony; possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor; and two counts of neglect of a dependent, both Class C felonies.

Jurors found him not guilty of two counts of receiving stolen property for firearms -- an AK 90 assault rifle and a 9 mm handgun -- that had been reported stolen in two separate burglaries. Those firearms were found in Matlock's garage.

The neglect charges were for his girlfriend's children, ages 5 and 7, who were inside the home when officers showed up with the search warrant.

April 18, 2012: WLFITV

WL man convicted for dealing cocaine



Dan Klein

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A West Lafayette man faces up to 58 years in prison after officers found \$12,000 of cocaine in his possession.

Dandre Craig Matlock, 29, was found guilty of six charges including dealing cocaine and two counts of neglect of a dependent.

Last August, officers went to Matlock's home and found a brick of cocaine weighing more than four ounces, along with three guns that were reported stolen in separate burglaries in 2009 and an assault rifle.

Matlock's girlfriend and her 5-year-old and 7-year-old children were in the home at the time.

He's due to be sentenced May 14.

Jury convicts attempted murderer



Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WFLI) - A Lafayette man faces decades behind bars after a jury convicts him of 13 felony charges including two counts of attempted murder.

Rickie Gilliam, 47, was convicted on all counts today after a two-and-half day trial.

In January 2011, Gilliam followed the mother of her child and a male friend to the Economy Inn, jumped out of his car and started shooting at the other two people as they drove off. In the 911 call, the mother identified Gilliam as the shooter.

A SWAT team made entry into his home. Gilliam wasn't home but they found three pounds of marijuana and other paraphernalia.

Gilliam faced and was convicted on fourteen counts in all. Thirteen counts were felonies: two counts of attempted murder, two counts of attempted aggravated battery, two counts of attempted battery by deadly weapon, criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon, pointing a firearm, dealing in marijuana, possession of marijuana over 30 grams, maintaining a common nuisance, and serious violent felon in possession of a firearm.

He was also convicted on a misdemeanor count of carrying a handgun without a license.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Gilliam faces at least 26 years in prison, but a judge could sentence him to more than 100. His sentencing is set for May 14.

April 18, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial begins in shooting outside city hotel

A Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury will decide whether a Lafayette man is guilty of attempted murder and numerous other felonies after police allege he shot into an occupied vehicle 16 months ago.

No one was injured, though multiple shots from a small-caliber handgun were fired.

Testimony in 47-year-old Rickie B. Gilliam's trial began Tuesday and is expected to continue this morning.

The shooting occurred about 3 a.m. Jan. 15, 2011, in the parking lot of the Economy Inn, 2200 Sagamore Parkway North. The investigation led Lafayette police to Gilliam's home at 920 N. 23rd St., and SWAT officers were called.

Gilliam also is charged with dealing marijuana, based on items found inside his home.

Detective Joe Clyde, a SWAT officer who was the team's leader that day, testified Tuesday that he smelled "raw marijuana" in the dining room area once inside.

The lead charge against Gilliam, attempted murder, is a Class A felony punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison.

If Gilliam is found guilty of the underlying charges, jurors could then decide whether he's guilty of being a serious violent felon in possession of a firearm.

That charge cannot be introduced first because a defendant's criminal history is typically not admissible during the first phase of a trial.

April 17, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Mom gets prison time after toddler wanders off

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

The mother of a Lafayette toddler who was found wandering outside alone last August, nearly walking into rush-hour traffic, was sentenced Monday to six months in prison.

That will be followed by 18 months with community corrections and one year on probation for 26-year-old Crystal N. Allen, of Lafayette.

Allen pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to neglect of a dependent, a Class D felony, and resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor.

On Aug. 30, Lafayette police were called to the Citgo gas station at South Creasy and McCarty lanes after a woman saw a boy almost walk into traffic there. The woman's daughter jumped out and grabbed him, and they went into Citgo for help.

According to court documents, when officers first arrived, the 3-year-old boy could not speak and seemed unaware of his surroundings. They eventually learned that he lived at 1018 Julia Lane, about a half-mile from the gas station.

When officers went to that address, the boy's father, Orestes R. Glover, answered the door. Glover did not live there but had been watching a younger sibling.

Allen showed up while officers were still at the house. She told investigators that the boy was playing outside with other children when she left to go shopping.

The resisting charge is because Allen ran into a bathroom to get away from the officers, then removed her leg restraints and slipped out of handcuffs.

During Monday's sentencing hearing, Judge Don Daniel gave Allen a combined 12 days credit for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

Sometime between her arrest and Monday's hearing, Allen had regained custody of the 3-year-old.

Glover, 42, previously pleaded guilty to false informing, a Class B misdemeanor, for lying about who was inside the house. He was sentenced to 180 days in prison.

April 16, 2012: WLFITV

Attempted murder trial begins Tuesday

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A man suspected of firing shots at two people inside a car more than a year ago, will learn his fate in court this week.

A Tippecanoe County jury trial is scheduled to begin Tuesday for 47-year-old Rickie Gilliam. He's charged with thirteen felonies, including attempted murder, attempted battery and dealing marijuana.

Attorneys and prosecutors selected a jury Monday.

Police say in January 2011, Gilliam hit a vehicle multiple times with bullets fired from a small caliber handgun in the parking lot of the Economy Inn on Sagamore Parkway North. Two people were in the car at the time, but weren't injured.

The trial is expected to last through Wednesday.

April 13, 2012: WLFH

On house arrest, man sells cocaine to undercover cops



Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A man on house arrest for a prior cocaine possession conviction hand delivers cocaine to undercover agents.

Now, 40-year-old Robert Andre Lee Jordan will spend the next 35 years in prison. Last month, Jordan pled guilty dealing cocaine, one of eight felony charges he faced.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said, while on house arrest, Jordan gave cocaine to undercover officers.

He was sentenced Thursday to 30 years for crime and five additional years for a prior conviction.

Harrington said in court Jordan apologized to his family and the community, saying he should have known better.

April 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

WL man held on child molesting charge

A West Lafayette man is accused of repeatedly fondling a 5-year-old girl in his care.

Kurt D. Saltzmann, 40, was charged Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with child molesting as a Class C felony. He was being held in the Tippecanoe County Jail on a \$10,000 surety bond.

Saltzman has been incarcerated since Wednesday, the day that the girl's mother contacted the West Lafayette Police Department.

The girl told her mother on Tuesday that Saltzman "poked her there."

According to a probable cause affidavit, Saltzman allegedly admitted to the crime and said the acts aroused him.

He claimed to realizing that it was wrong and that he stopped.

He estimated that the fondling occurred five times.

April 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Meth charges stick to Dayton man, 30



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Dayton man faces a minimum of 23 years in prison for cooking methamphetamine that was tossed out of a car window during a traffic stop 15 months ago.

Richard L. Young, 30, was found guilty Wednesday of conspiracy to commit in dealing meth, a Class A felony; two counts of dealing in meth, a Class A felony; possession of methamphetamine as a Class B felony; possession of methamphetamine as a Class C felony; information of an illegal drug lab, a Class D felony; maintaining a common nuisance, a Class D felony; possession of paraphernalia, a Class A misdemeanor; and two counts of unlawful purchase of pseudoephedrine, a Class C misdemeanor.

Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 then found Young guilty of being a habitual substance offender, an enhancement that will add three to eight years to Young's sentence.

He will be sentenced May 11.

Young was a passenger in a vehicle driven by his girlfriend, Angela C. Boorum that tried to flee from Indiana State Police on Jan. 22, 2011, on County Road 550 East in Tippecanoe County.

During the brief pursuit, someone tossed a thermos and plastic pitcher out the car window. Both items tested positive for ammonia, Trooper Ron Fisher testified. The pitcher also contained about 4 grams of meth.

Meth made in small batches is known as the one-pot method, allowing cookers to mix up a batch essentially anywhere. But the method also is highly volatile.

This led to an investigation in which meth and paraphernalia were found in Young's home on Clifty Falls, a street in Dayton.

Troopers also reviewed sales logs from area big box stores and pharmacies, which showed that Young and Boorum bought more than the legal amount of decongestants containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine.

That act is called "smurfing" and is meant to circumvent the law.

Pseudoephedrine and ephedrine are key ingredients in cooking meth. Indiana law prohibits people from purchasing more than 3.6 grams of medication containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine per day and up to 9 grams every 30 days.

April 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jurors find Lafayette man guilty of molesting charges



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man faces a minimum of 20 years in prison after being found guilty Wednesday of repeatedly forcing a 10-year-old girl to perform sexual acts with him for nearly a year.

Charles S. Day, 62, stood trial Tuesday and Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 for three counts of child molesting as a Class A felony; attempted child molesting as a Class A felony; two counts of child molesting as a Class C felony; and child solicitation, a Class D felony.

Jurors found him guilty of all seven felonies.

Day is scheduled to be sentenced on May 25 by Judge Randy Williams.

During the trial, jurors heard testimony from the victim. Day is an acquaintance of the girl's parents, and she often slept over at his Lafayette home when her father worked late-night shifts.

The girl would sleep either in Day's room or his wife's room. The couple had separate bedrooms.

According to court documents, the girl told investigators that Day paid her \$20 and called it "their little secret."

Incidents occurred between March 2010 and February 2011, beginning when she was 10 years old.

The Class A felony charges against Day are punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison for each count. Because they occurred on separate days, Williams could order the counts to be served consecutively.

April 11, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man admits cooking meth that led to explosion

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man whose apartment caught fire after a methamphetamine lab explosion in October has admitted to cooking the caustic, highly addictive drug.

Steven K. Hanna, 26, pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine, a Class B felony.

Hanna had been slated to stand trial beginning Tuesday.

The explosion and fire at Hanna's downtown Lafayette apartment injured 32-year-old Willard Dunn of Lafayette. Dunn, who had been cooking meth with a woman in Hanna's apartment, suffered severe burns on his hands, face and legs.

The explosion burned an adjacent apartment, shook windows and broke glass at nearby properties. Police and firefighters briefly closed Brown and North Ninth streets so a decontamination station could be set up.

Hanna will be sentenced on May 11.

April 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial begins for Dayton man charged with dealing meth

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Tippecanoe County jury will decide what role a Dayton man played in cooking methamphetamine that was tossed out of a car window during a traffic stop 15 months ago.

Richard L. Young, 30, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of dealing in meth; two counts of possession of meth; information of an illegal drug lab; possession of paraphernalia; and maintaining a common nuisance. All of those counts are felonies.

He also is charged with two counts of unlawful purchase of pseudoephedrine, which is a misdemeanor.

Young's trial on those counts began Tuesday in Superior Court 2. Jurors heard testimony from Indiana State Police troopers and a Tippecanoe County sheriff's deputy involved in a Jan. 22, 2011, traffic stop on County Road 550 East in Tippecanoe County.

A vehicle driven by Young's girlfriend, Angela C. Boorum, drove through a stop sign and led police on a brief chase down snow-covered, rural roads.

Once Young stopped and got out of the vehicle, she was belligerent -- repeatedly yelling curse words and appearing under the influence, Trooper Ryan Winters testified.

Young, however, was cooperative, Winters said. He admitted to using meth with the past three days and, after police went to his Dayton home, told Winters that meth was hidden in a stereo speaker.

Jurors also heard from sheriff's Deputy Tom Lehman, who assisted on the traffic stop. Lehman traced the route that Young took during the pursuit and found a red thermos and plastic pitcher, which both tested positive for ammonia, along the roadway in the snow.

"I immediately noticed a substance on the bottom of it," Lehman said of the pitcher.

The pitcher also contained meth, as did foil packets found in a plastic shopping bag that also had been tossed from Young's car, said Trooper Ron Fisher, a member of the state police Meth Suppression Section.

Boorum faced similar charges, but she pleaded guilty to possession of meth, resisting law enforcement and operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

She was sentenced last month to 365 days in the Tippecanoe County Jail, four years and 129 days on community corrections and four years on probation.

Boorum is expected to testify against Young.

Testimony continues this morning.

April 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Trial for Lafayette man accused of child molesting continues today

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man is on trial this week for allegations that he repeatedly forced a 10-year-old girl into having sexual contact with him for nearly a year.

Charles S. Day, 62, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with three counts of child molesting as a Class A felony; attempted child molesting as a Class A felony; two counts of child molesting as a Class C felony; and child solicitation, a Class D felony.

Day is an acquaintance of the girl's parents. She sometimes slept at his Lafayette home.

His trial began Tuesday and will continue today.

The girl told investigators that Day paid her \$20 and called it "their little secret."

April 10, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Court orders evaluation of prosecutor impersonator

An Illinois woman will undergo an evaluation before being sentenced for pretending she worked in the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office and trying to throw her then-boyfriend's armed robbery trial.

Sharnetta M. Barnes, 24, pleaded guilty in January to attempted obstruction of justice, a Class D felony, and impersonating a public servant, a Class A misdemeanor.

She was scheduled to be sentenced Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5, but Judge Les Meade postponed the hearing to May 1 at the request of her attorney because Barnes is expected to meet with a psychologist next week.

In September 2010, Barnes was dating Edward D. Mercer, one of three northwest Indiana men accused of participating in a botched armed robbery that turned into a shootout in the parking lot of a Subway restaurant at 3990 Indiana 38 East. No one was injured.

Barnes admitting to calling one of the victims and telling him the trial was moved to a later date.

April 9, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man faces felonies for sexual misconduct with a minor



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - A Lafayette man is facing four felony charges, for allegedly having sexual contact with a 14-year-old girl in his care.

37-year-old Yorel Michael Wallace was charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court Monday with four felonies, including two counts of Sexual Misconduct With a Minor.

According to court documents, Wallace had intercourse with the girl on two occasions when she was staying at his home. The documents say at least one incident was also witnessed by a 9-year-old girl.

April 6, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man admits to sexual misconduct with teen

A 44-year-old Lafayette man faces six to 20 years in prison after admitting that he impregnated a teenager formerly under his care.

John E. Gardner pleaded guilty Wednesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to two counts of sexual misconduct with a minor, a Class B felony.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the length of Gardner's sentence will be left to Judge Randy Williams. The two counts will be merged, however.

According to court documents, the teenager was 15 years old when she gave birth to a daughter in September 2009.

The girl came forward with the allegations against Gardner last year, after officials were trying to determine who is the baby's father.

The paternity issue was raised through the Indiana Department of Child Services and because of child support concerns.

The teenager told investigators that sexual intercourse with Gardner began when she was 14 years old and occurred more than 25 times. Gardner also gave statements to Lafayette police that matched the girl's story.

April 6, 2012: WLFITV

Men face charges for pizza delivery driver robbery

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - Two Lafayette men each face several felony charges after investigators say they robbed a pizza delivery driver at gunpoint.

18-year-old Antonio Deondre White and Lorenzo Johnson both face three felonies, conspiracy to commit robbery while armed with a deadly weapon, robbery while armed with a deadly weapon and theft.

Police said on March 15, White and Johnson pulled out a bb pistol and robbed the driver, Joshua Upshaw, after he made a delivery at Crestview Apartments on South River Road in West Lafayette.

Upshaw told officers the men got away with 11 to 12 dollars.

Court documents reveal during separate interviews with investigators last week, White and Johnson admitted pulling a gun on Upshaw and taking money from him.

April 4, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Murder plea nets man 50 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Clarence "Baybay" Smith Jr. was fatally shot in the abdomen last summer after refusing to hand over his money in a botched robbery attempt outside a Lafayette apartment complex.

Details of what precipitated the shooting were revealed by the shooter, 22-year-old

Michael A. Foster II, during a cleanup statement that he was required to provide to the Lafayette Police Department as part of his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Foster, of Lafayette, pleaded guilty in March to murder. He was sentenced Wednesday to 50 years in prison, followed by five years on supervised probation, by Judge Thomas Busch of Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

"You're going to be in prison a long time. You deserve to be in prison a long time because of what you've done," Busch said before rattling off Foster's lengthy criminal history, which began when he was younger than 10 years old.

"Unfortunately, you could see this day coming, based on your record."

Under his plea agreement, additional felony charges of robbery by means of a deadly weapon, resulting in seriously bodily injury; conspiracy to commit robbery; theft; and being a serious violent felon in possession of a handgun were dropped.

The plea agreement capped Foster's prison sentence at 50 years. He had faced up to 65 years under the murder count alone.

Foster is required to testify at upcoming jury trials for his co-defendants, 23-year-old Dartanyan Porche of West Lafayette and 22-year-old Kevin K. Williams of Lafayette, in late April and June, respectively.

The three men had faced identical charges on allegations that they lured Smith, 25, to an isolated apartment building at 1840 Summertime Trail, near South 18th Street and Ortman Lane, on July 28, 2011.

Foster opted not to speak during Wednesday's sentencing hearing. He previously admitted that they contacted Smith under the guise of selling him a handgun.

According to Chief Deputy Prosecutor Kristen McVey, Foster was more forthcoming in his cleanup statement -- detailing conversations with Porche and Williams about how they planned to lure Smith, then rob him. They knew he would have money on him to purchase the handgun, McVey said.

After Foster shot Smith, the suspects took his money and ran back to their vehicle.

An off-duty sheriff's deputy who happened to be nearby heard the police call and followed them. All three were arrested shortly after, near Lafayette Country Club.

"You shot him because he wasn't cooperating, not because of any revenge. ... The shooting was the result of his not cooperating with the robbery," McVey reminded Foster on Wednesday.

None of Smith's family members attended the sentencing hearing. But some of them did write letters to Busch, urging that he not accept Foster's plea agreement.

"I am so deeply disturbed at the prospect of what message such anything less than life would send to any would-be offenders who realize an opportunity to exact revenge on someone and then have the possibility of walking on the streets again," Linita Robinson, a Lafayette resident who identified herself as Smith's aunt, wrote.

Both Robinson and a second relative, Jagga Rent of Indianapolis, wrote Busch to say that Foster deserved a life sentence.

"It is no secret that my cousin made poor decisions in his past, and we all know that it takes some people learning the hard way to finally 'get it,' " Rent, who identified himself as a cousin, wrote.

He is a dean of students at a high school near downtown Indianapolis.

"I attempt to redirect at-risk youth on a daily basis so they stay out of your courtroom and ultimately lead productive lives," he wrote. "... Mr. Foster has obviously not taken heed to this lesson, and there is no better time than now for him to learn that valuable lesson.

"I truly believe there are some things that are irrevocable and deserve no second chance Murder is No. 1 on the list."

Busch brought up the letters in court -- noting, however, that there was nothing about the crime that hasn't been revealed by Foster.

Foster received a combined 502 days credit for time already served in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior. Because Indiana offers prisoners one day credit for each day served, Foster could be released from prison in 24 years.

April 4, 2012: WLFITV

Lafayette man pleads guilty to murder

Brittany Tyner

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLF) - A Lafayette man was sentenced Wednesday after pleading guilty to the murder of 26-year-old Clarence Smith.

Michael Anthony Foster II will serve 50 years in prison. He will then spend five years on supervised probation.

"Write me, write me," said Foster just moments after being sentenced.

As part of a plea agreement, Foster pleaded guilty to murder on March 5, 2012.

Investigators said Foster, along with two other men, met with Clarence Smith on July 28, 2011 for a marijuana deal. Foster said the group of men planned to rob Smith instead. Smith wouldn't cooperate. Court documents said that's when Smith was shot and killed.

Prosecuting attorney Kristen McVey said both sides worked hard to reach a sufficient plea agreement.

"I believe in light, in all the circumstances and all the facts in this case that that is an appropriate sentence and I'm pleased that the judge accepted it," said McVey.

As part of Foster's plea agreement, all remaining felony charges, including robbery, were dropped. In court, Judge Busch said Foster had an extensive criminal background. Starting at the age of nine, some of Foster's previous charges include theft, battery, and resisting law enforcement.

Judge Busch said Foster had multiple chances to change his ways. He said because he failed to do so, he now deserves to spend a long time in prison.

April 3, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former Purdue associate dean expected to plead guilty

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A former Purdue University associate dean, Robert P. "Pablo" Malavenda, is expected to plead guilty to accusations that he stole pumpkins, smoke alarms, light bulbs and bedding from the West Lafayette Walmart Supercenter last October.

Court records show that Malavenda, 50, is scheduled to enter a guilty plea on April 9 in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 -- one day before his previously scheduled jury trial.

Whether Malavenda signed a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, and terms of any agreement, won't be public until the hearing.

Malavenda is charged with theft, a Class D felony, and conversion, a Class A misdemeanor.

The charges stemmed from events on Oct. 8, when Malavenda allegedly was caught on store surveillance cameras returning \$160.17 worth of items that he did not actually purchase.

Investigators suspect that Malavenda initially bought some of the items from Walmart at 2801 Northwestern Ave., then walked back into the store with his receipt and empty, reusable shopping bags.

The incident ultimately led to Malavenda's departure from Purdue.

As a Purdue associate dean, Malavenda oversaw more than 690 student activities and organizations on the West Lafayette campus, including fraternities, sororities and independent housing units.

April 3, 2012: WLFITV

Lafayette man sentenced for stealing tools while on meth

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFH) - A Lafayette man is sentenced for stealing tools from an Office Depot while he was on meth.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Samuel Clark was sentenced to 11 years in the Department of Corrections and 4 years community corrections.

Clark was found guilty last month of possession of methamphetamine with a firearm and carrying a handgun by a convicted felon and two counts of theft.

Last August, officers found Clark in his truck behind the Office Depot on Creasy Lane in Lafayette.

Police then found a semi- automatic handgun in the vehicle along with stolen items from the store.

April 2, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Home Depot break-in nets man 8 years

A homeless man from Lafayette was sentenced Monday to eight years in prison stemming from his arrest last August following a break-in at Office Depot.

Samuel "Jude" Clark, 37, was found guilty in March of possession of methamphetamine; carrying a handgun without a license; two counts of theft; and possession of paraphernalia following a two-day jury trial in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Senior Judge Robert Hall then found Clark guilty of being a habitual offender.

Clark's arrest on Aug. 30 came when police responded to an alarm at Office Depot, 100 S. Creasy Lane.

Clark was found in his truck behind the building. He had an air conditioner coil that was stolen from the roof of Office Depot, a handgun and a manual for making meth.

Clark's prison sentence will be followed by three years on community corrections and four years on probation.

April 2, 2012: WLFI TV

Former broker will not face jail time

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former Lafayette real estate broker will not spend time in jail for forging signatures on land contracts.

In court Friday, Tippecanoe Circuit Judge Don Daniel ordered 43-year-old Brenda Hatfield to spend the next year in Tippecanoe County Community Corrections, followed by a year of supervised probation and a year on unsupervised probation. She'll also have to serve 96 hours of community service, and pay close to \$4,000 restitution to the county assessor's office.

In February, Daniel found Hatfield guilty of 12 felony charges of forgery. Hatfield was found "not guilty" on a charge of corrupt business influence.

Hatfield left the Tippecanoe Circuit courtroom Friday morning shielded by three umbrellas and a group of family and friends. There was no comment from Hatfield or her entourage on news that she would not spend any time in jail for 12 felony forgery convictions, after forging people's signatures on land contracts more than two years ago to obtain tax breaks.

However, Hatfield did give a tearful statement to Judge Daniel during her sentencing hearing, saying, "I'm sorry for anybody who's been hurt in this situation. I'm ashamed. I've hated myself for this." She's previously said she was under financial pressure to have the contracts signed.

"She thought that it was a very good idea for the tenant occupants to become homeowner occupants," Hatfield's defense attorney, E. Kent Moore, said. "It had an effect on real estate taxes. And I think it just, end of the year deadline, overwhelming event, and a poor choice was made."

In court Friday, Judge Don Daniel addressed Hatfield, saying, "I understand that this is something stupid you did while under stress. Almost everyone I sentence has done something stupid, and they've done it while under stress."

Daniel went on to say Hatfield was no different from anyone else in his courtroom, and he was tempted to give her a harsher sentence. But when the time came, he chose a year of community corrections and two years of probation, with all jail time suspended.

"I was appreciative of the judge's comments," Moore said. "I think at the end of the day, that was the right sentence."

Judge Daniel said factors that played into the lighter sentence include Hatfield's lack of a criminal history, support from family and friends, and the fact that she's unlikely to re-offend.

Based on NewsChannel 18 viewers' comments on Facebook, many people are unhappy with the sentence Hatfield received.

Brenda Burkhead Wellman writes, "12 FELONIES and no jail time... this isn't right!! Unbelievable." LaTrisha Brown says, "My daughter was really affected by this and just basically was slapped in the face." And Karen Crowell tells us, "She should have to pay everyone back and do jail time also."

March 30, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

No prison time for real estate broker Hatfield given community corrections, probation

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette landlord and former real estate broker has been spared prison for having two employees forge tenants' signatures on documents that would have provided her with significant tax breaks on her rental properties.

Brenda K. Hatfield, 43, instead will serve one year on community corrections -- some combination of work release, home detention and day reporting -- followed by two years on probation.

She also must pay \$3,939.39 in restitution to the Tippecanoe County auditor's office and complete 96 hours of community service.

That was the sentence Judge Don Daniel of Tippecanoe Circuit Court handed down Friday morning, though with reservations.

In February, Daniel presided over Hatfield's two-day bench trial, during which Hatfield was found guilty of 12 counts of forgery, a Class C felony. She faced up to 10 years incarceration.

The judge acquitted her of corrupt business influence.

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Daniel chided Hatfield's actions and her explanations for them, including -- according to her attorney, Kent Moore -- a large amount of stress.

"Nobody robs a bank because they want to, or does drugs just to do drugs. ... Nobody makes good decisions when committing a crime," the judge told Hatfield. "You're no different than anybody else with stress in life."

"I'm tired of people coming in saying they're a good person who made bad decisions."

But Daniel also noted that putting Hatfield in prison would be a waste of resources and taxpayer money. Hatfield had no criminal history and strong community ties. She also homeschools her 14-year-old son, according to Moore.

"So many people look at our system and think there is one law for rich people and one law for poor people. To treat you the same as I treat that other mythical person that I talk about is very tempting," Daniel said, referring to

the contrast between Hatfield's upbringing and defendants who come from broken homes and are raised around drugs.

Under Indiana's homestead exemption rules, property taxes are significantly lower on a property occupied by an owner than a property of same assessed value that is a rental.

Each count of forgery Hatfield was convicted of stood for a person or couple who rented from Hatfield and found out in March 2010, through property sales disclosures published in the Journal & Courier, that they had supposedly entered land contracts to purchase the properties they were renting.

At the time, Hatfield was employed at Coldwell Banker Shook Agency in Lafayette. Two assistants there helped her forge signatures on the land contracts.

Deputy Prosecutor Jason Biss argued for a four-year sentence that would include prison, community corrections and probation. Biss read aloud Hatfield's own explanation for her crimes, which was attached to a confidential pre-sentence report completed by Tippecanoe County's probation office.

In that statement, Hatfield said her assistants approached her about them forging tenants' signatures. That was a significant part of her defense during the bench trial.

"Perhaps once again she's throwing her assistants under the bus, so to speak," Biss said.

Her assistants were never criminally charged.

Hatfield, who sought help from therapists after the accusations were made public, gave a brief, tearful apology during Friday's hearing and said she was "ashamed."

Her attorney submitted more than 40 letters in support of Hatfield, including one from Charlie Shook, president of Coldwell Banker Shook.

Hatfield's husband, Greg Hatfield, hand-wrote a four-page letter to Daniel, during which he outlined how his wife was overwhelmed by their numerous rental properties, a failed business venture to purchase a bar and personal matters.

"She is someone that lets people take advantage of her. That made her a bad landlord," Greg Hatfield wrote. "After this broke in March 2009, Brenda finally got a chance to look at our rent roll. It was over \$46,000 behind.

"... She just wants this to quit effecting (sic) people's lives. You have no idea how much this has affected her. This will end up the best thing that happened to her. It stopped the madness her life had become."

None of the victims testified on Friday. One of them, Matthew Martin of Lafayette, did write a letter to the court, suggesting that the houses Hatfield "sold" via land contract be transferred to the victims.

"If selling these houses on land contracts was important enough to forge signatures, then one is forced to think that the houses are no longer wanted," Martin wrote.

March 29, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

A not guilty verdict in 2nd trial on molestation charge Two different juries. Two different verdicts.

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

In April 2010, a Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 jury found Michael Joseph "Joe" Gaby of Lafayette guilty of child molesting, a Class A felony, that the alleged victim said happened more than a decade ago. Gaby was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

But last year the Indiana Court of Appeals threw out the conviction because the girl, when testifying, was allowed to "refresh her memory" by reviewing her statement to investigators.

Gaby, 43, stood trial on the same charge this week in Superior Court 2. Jurors deliberated about 90 minutes Wednesday before finding him not guilty.

The same allegations were presented at both trials. The girl, who is the daughter of Gaby's former neighbor, came forward in April 2009. That month she told a teacher that she was sexually abused as a child.

The girl, now 18, testified that she was 3 or 4 when the alleged molestation took place.

Gaby, who used to baby-sit the girl, denied the allegations. But he recalled helping the girl change clothes once after she vomited and said that, if he touched her then, it was accidental.

The prosecutor's office was able to pursue criminal charges because the charge alleged penetration, which elevates child molesting to an A felony, for which there is no statute of limitations.

Lafayette police Detective Joe Clyde said he "understands and respects" the verdicts. The case was challenging because the allegations happened 14 years ago.

"When you then add the age of the victim, that makes it even more difficult. But when you have a case where you believe there is probable cause, just because it's challenging, we're not going to quit investigating it."

March 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Bank robbery suspect set to enter plea

A Plainfield man is scheduled to plead guilty next week to holding up a Lafayette bank at knifepoint last August, court records show.

Joshua P. Hendrix, 31, is charged in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with two counts of robbery while armed with a deadly weapon; two counts of criminal confinement; and one count of theft.

All five counts are felonies.

Hendrix is slated to plead guilty on April 5. If he signed a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, details won't be made public until that hearing.

The charges stem from a holdup on Aug. 25 at Salin Bank, 330 N. Creasy Lane in Lafayette. The suspect displayed a knife and demanded cash.

No one was injured.

The suspect got away on foot, but Hendrix was arrested the following week, shortly after police released photos of the robbery suspect to news media.

Hendrix currently is in the Indiana Department of Correction, serving time on convictions out of Marion County for resisting law enforcement and battery on a law enforcement officer.

Those charges stemmed from Hendrix trying to flee after Lafayette police, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and an FBI task force tracked him to a home in Indianapolis.

March 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette used car dealer avoids jail, ordered to pay \$183,000

A Lafayette used car dealer has been spared prison time for having an employee forge customers' signatures on titles and for passing bad checks to purchase vehicles from Indianapolis.

Steven M. Firestone, 57, pleaded guilty in January to two counts of forgery, a Class C felony, and theft a Class D felony.

He was sentenced this afternoon by Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel to three years on community corrections - some combination of work release, home detention and day reporting - and one year on supervised probation.

Firestone also must pay \$182,878.32 in restitution and complete 120 hours of road crew.

Under a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, additional charges of corrupt business influence, counterfeiting and check fraud were dropped.

Firestone is the owner of Firestone Auto Sales at 1501 Schuyler Ave.

He testified today that his auto dealership failed after Firestone purchased property on U.S. 52 that he wasn't able to sell or rent out. That cost him \$10,000 a month.

"We were in arrears. The economy was very, very, very tough," Firestone said.

In October 2010, Firestone and employee James T. Gerber were arrested and charged after a lengthy investigation by the Lafayette Police Department.

Gerber pleaded guilty last year to two counts of counterfeiting, a Class D felony - admitting that he forged customers' signatures on Firestone's orders in August 2008.

He gained nothing, not even commission for selling the cars, by doing so.

March 21, 2012: WLFI TV

DJ Byrd signs diversion agreement

Staff Reports

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Our partner, the Purdue Exponent, reported Purdue basketball player David Jonathan "DJ" Byrd signed a diversion agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office that could have his public intoxication charge dropped if he is able to stay out of a trouble for a year, according to Byrd's attorney, Ed Kenny.

Under the agreement, Byrd will have to complete 20 hours of community service and pay a \$269 diversion program fee. He cannot consume alcoholic beverages or enter any bar, tavern, or liquor store in addition to agreeing to random alcohol and drug screens requested by prosecutors or the police.

Byrd was charged with public intoxication at Where Else Bar on Feb. 17 during an allegation in which he allegedly bit a bouncer. The bouncer did not pursue charges.

An Indiana State Police trooper drove by as Byrd was walking away from the bar and Byrd blew a 0.219 percent on the breathalyzer at the scene.

The Crawfordsville, Ind. native averaged 8.9 points per game for the Boilermakers this season and won the Big Ten Sixth Man of the Year award.

March 17, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Second guilty plea in Gibson killing

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A second suspect has admitted that he helped kill Jeremy K. Gibson, a 26-year-old Lafayette father who was brutally beaten last July and buried in a Tippecanoe County cornfield.

Darren J. Englert, 20, of Lafayette pleaded guilty Friday afternoon in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to murder. He faces 45 to 65 years in prison, and Judge Randy Williams blocked off an entire day -- June 15 -- for Englert's sentencing hearing.

Members of Gibson's family declined to comment afterward.

Englert's version of what took place the night that he, 20-year-old Carolann R. Clear and 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams forced Gibson from his home near downtown Lafayette to a cornfield at U.S. 231 and County Road 500 North differs from what Clear avowed during her guilty plea in February.

Clear, who was Gibson's girlfriend, fingered both Englert and Antonio Williams in beating her boyfriend with garden implements on July 6, 2011, while she served as lookout.

Englert, however, on Friday pinned the beating on Williams -- alleging that Williams struck Gibson with his fist, which knocked Gibson into a small hole that Englert and Williams dug.

He did admit to then handing Williams a pickax, which Williams used to further hit Gibson. Englert also admitted to covering Gibson's body with dirt and cornstalks and dumping the tools they used in the Wabash River, near the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge.

"At what point did you believe Jeremy Gibson was going to be murdered?" Prosecutor Pat Harrington asked.

"When I seen him on the ground, and Antonio was over him," Englert replied.

Harrington asked Englert whether he delivered any blows to Gibson, but one of Englert's attorneys, Earl McCoy, objected to the question. After all attorneys on the case spoke privately with the judge, Harrington's question was dropped.

That's likely because Englert, in an unusual move, will stand trial beginning July 31 for the nine remaining offenses against him -- among them, conspiracy to commit murder, criminal confinement and fraud.

Englert's plea on Friday was done without the benefit of an agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office.

Those remaining charges carry a maximum, potential sentence of 116 years in prison.

Englert's attorneys, McCoy and Chad Montgomery, said afterward that they could not comment yet on why Englert pleaded guilty to one count but will stand trial on the others.

The rest of Englert's guilty plea hearing focused on how he did nothing to stop Williams, despite realizing that Williams planned to kill Gibson. Englert also admitted that he accompanied Williams back to Gibson's body the afternoon of July 6 to pour acid over the makeshift grave.

Their intent? To "destroy DNA" evidence so they could not be linked back to the crime, Englert testified.

Clear, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder, a Class A felony, and fraud, a Class D felony, will be sentenced in May.

Williams died in January of lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after attempting to kill himself by overdosing on methadone. At the time, Williams was at Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, serving the remainder of a robbery conviction.

Legally, statements that Williams gave to investigators about the crime cannot be used at court.

According to court documents, Williams described to Lafayette police in great detail how Gibson was killed. He also admitted during a prior court hearing to telling detectives where they buried Gibson.

All three suspects had been staying with Gibson at his apartment on North Eighth Street. Incidents that led to Gibson's death began with an argument on late July 5 or July 6 between Gibson and Williams.

They were charged with equal culpability.

March 16, 2012: WLFI TV

2nd pleads guilty in beating death



- Patsy Schmidt

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor, Pat Harrington, Darren Englert pleaded guilty to the court for Count 2 murder in the beating death of Jeremy Gibson. His sentencing is set for June 15.

20-year-old CarolAnn Clear appeared February 17 before Tippecanoe Superior Judge Randy Williams, where she admitted to helping two men kill her boyfriend, Jeremy Gibson, last summer.

Clear and her attorneys submitted a plea agreement they made with the state of Indiana.

In the agreement, Clear pleads guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Murder, a Class A felony, and Fraud, a Class D felony.

In exchange, the other seven felony charges against her would be dropped, including a murder charge.

In court, Clear's attorney asked her questions, and she tearfully described how she acted as a lookout while Antonio Williams and Darren Englert beat Jeremy Gibson to death.

She also described going to a Village Pantry store with Englert the next day, where they used Gibson's bank card to buy several items.

In July, police said the crime started with an argument between Gibson and Williams at 1018 North 8th Street in Lafayette.

Police said 26-year-old Gibson was beaten, then taken to a field in Tippecanoe County where he was beaten again. This time was with a pick axe and shovel, then buried in that field.

Police soon arrested Antonio Williams, Darren Englert and Carol Clear for the crime.

In September, Gibson's family learned that Williams had been released more than a year early from the Indiana Department of Corrections for a prior conviction.

Since then, Gibson's family attorney filed a notice claiming Gibson's murder was a result of wrongful death.

Williams was being held in the Miami Correctional Facility and facing charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

March 15, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette man police shot at faces drug charges



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who was shot at by police after fleeing from a traffic stop last month on the city's south end has been charged with dealing cocaine in an unrelated case.

Jovan D. Patterson, 31, was not injured when Officer Khoury Eliasof the Lafayette Police Department fired one round into a rear, driver's side panel of Patterson's 1999 Lincoln Navigator on Feb. 17.

Though arrested afterward on suspicion of resisting law enforcement, operating a vehicle while intoxicated and other offenses, Patterson spent only a few days in the Tippecanoe County Jail before posting a combined \$25,000 surety and \$2,500 cash bond.

Patterson's most recent arrest - the one that resulted in his being charged Wednesday with dealing in cocaine, a Class B felony, possession of cocaine, a Class D felony, and possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor - came on March 9.

Here's what led to that arrest, according to a probable cause affidavit filed with the charges in Tippecanoe Circuit Court:

Officer Jason Walters was at the Village Pantry on South Fourth Street on March 9 to follow up on a report about drug activity in the area. Walters, a Lafayette police officer, is part of the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

While at the VP, Walters saw what appeared to be a drug transaction - a man standing outside the driver's side window of a sport-utility vehicle. The SUV's driver was Patterson.

Walters followed Patterson down South Fourth Street, then called another officer to make a traffic stop because Patterson allegedly had been speeding.

A marijuana cigarette was found in Patterson's wallet, and he was taken to the Tippecanoe County Jail. There, a corrections officer found a bag in Patterson's belly button area that contained what appeared to be six individually wrapped rocks of crack cocaine.

Patterson was being held Wednesday night on a \$25,000 surety and \$2,500 cash bond.

He has not yet been charged in the Feb. 17 chase that led to the police-action shooting. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Wednesday that his office is waiting on documents from other jurisdictions where Patterson has previously been tried.

March 14, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Inmate's DNA linked to 2000 Lafayette burglary crime



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jonline.com

Bloody toilet paper found at the scene of a break-in 12 years ago at a Lafayette coin laundry has led to criminal charges against a current Indiana Department of Correction inmate from West Lafayette.

Douglas P. Wilson Jr., 38, was charged Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 with burglary, a Class C felony; theft, a Class D felony; and criminal mischief, a Class D felony.

The burglary that Wilson is accused of committing took place on Dec. 13, 2000, at Kenny's Laundromat, 1400 Teal Road. A change machine mounted on the wall was missing, and several doors inside the business were pried open.

According to a probable cause affidavit, officers found a piece of toilet paper with appeared to have blood on it near the missing change machine. Blood also was on the wall.

The soiled toilet paper was collected and submitted as evidence. The Indiana State Police laboratory in Lowell was able to find a DNA profile, but no matches turned up after it was checked against Indiana's DNA database in 2002.

The lab routinely checked the evidence against the database and finally got a match on Sept. 1, 2011, to Wilson, according to the affidavit. Since June 2011, Wilson has been serving a 12-year sentence out of Tippecanoe County for dealing cocaine.

Another DNA sample from Wilson was taken this past January for comparison, and that again matched the DNA profile from the bloody toilet paper.

According to DOC records, Wilson previously served time in prison for a 1993 burglary conviction out of Tippecanoe County. Detective Paul Huff of the Lafayette Police Department said Tuesday that the FBI's Combined DNA Index System, or CODIS, wasn't launched until 1998. Even then, it was awhile before all states began submitting DNA samples, and at first it was only for the most serious felonies, Huff said.

Indiana launched its own parallel database about the same time.

Since 2005, Indiana requires all people convicted of a felony to provide a DNA sample.

March 14, 2012: WLFI TV

Laf. man faces 8 felonies, 3 misdemeanors



- Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces nearly a dozen charges after undercover officers said they bought marijuana from him on three occasions.

38-year-old John Carr faces eight felony and three misdemeanor charges including dealing marijuana within 1,000 feet of school property and maintaining a common nuisance.

Lafayette police officers said in the last six weeks, they bought marijuana from Carr on three occasions. They later went to his home in the 1700 block of Everett Street with a search warrant where they discovered about 140 grams of marijuana and money from the undercover buys.

March 14, 2012: WLFI TV

DNA connects suspect to 11-year-old burglary case

- Dan Klein

TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - DNA may be able to solve a decade-old burglary case in Lafayette.

38-year-old Douglas Wilson Jr. faces burglary, theft, and criminal mischief charges. They are all connected with a case from December 2000 when Kenny's Laundromat was broken into and the change machine on the wall went missing.

Officers recovered blood samples from the wall and some toilet paper on the floor. The DNA didn't match any offender in the database at the time, but last September, forensic scientists matched it to Wilson who is in prison on a cocaine dealing conviction.

He's currently serving a 12-year sentence at the Pendleton facility.

March 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Molesting case lands man in prison for 8 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who admitted having sexual contact with a young girl in his care over a two-year period has been sentenced to eight years in prison.

Anastacio Mendez, who also goes by his Native American name Lone Wolf, pleaded guilty in February to four counts of child molesting, all Class C felonies.

The 60-year-old was sentenced Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 by Judge Thomas Busch.

Charges against Mendez were filed last August, shortly after the victim was interviewed during an unrelated investigation by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

According to court documents, the then-12-year-old told police that a man named "Lone Wolf" would sometimes go into her bedroom and make her participate in sexual activity.

The girl described several different scenarios, including one time when she was promised ice cream in exchange.

She estimated that the incidents began when she was in third grade and continued until mid-July 2011.

Mendez initially denied ever touching the girl inappropriately, instead claiming that the girl began peeking at him in the shower and that he allowed her to touch him because she was curious.

He eventually admitted to incidents that matched what the girl described.

The lead charge against Mendez, child molesting as a Class A felony, was dropped as part of his plea agreement. Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the girl, who is mentally challenged, could not remember what happened that led to the Class A felony count.

Mendez must provide an updated address and other identifiers to law enforcement for life for Indiana's Sex and Violent Offender Registry.

In Indiana, allegations of child molesting can vary from intercourse to fondling, with intercourse being the highest level, an A felony offense.

March 13, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Ex-Purdue wrestler sentenced in theft

A former Purdue University wrestler will serve time on community corrections and probation for stealing a \$3,500 bicycle that he planned to turn around and sell to help pay for college.

Juan M. Archuleta, 24, of West Lafayette pleaded guilty last month in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 to burglary, a Class B felony.

During his sentencing hearing Monday, Archuleta was given credit for a combined 314 days already spent in the Tippecanoe County Jail and for good behavior.

But he must still serve about 415 days on community corrections -- some combination of home detention, work release and day reporting -- and six years on probation.

According to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington, in May 2011, Archuleta was employed in maintenance at a West Lafayette apartment complex.

Archuleta admitted using his master key to access one property and taking a \$3,500 bike.

"He confessed and said he needed money to pay for tuition," Harrington said.

Archuleta is a former wrestler who also competed in a mixed martial arts event at Purdue, according to Journal & Courier archives.

60-year-old molester sentenced to 8 years in prison

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man who admitted having sexual contact with a young girl in his care over a two-year period has been sentenced to eight years in prison.

Anastacio Mendez, who also goes by his Native American name, Lone Wolf, pleaded guilty in February to four counts of child molesting, all Class C felonies.

The 60-year-old was sentenced today in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Charges against Mendez were filed last August, shortly after the victim was interviewed during the course of an unrelated investigation by the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Office.

According to court documents, the then-12-year-old told police that a man named "Lone Wolf" would sometimes go into her bedroom and make her participate in sexual activity.

The girl described several different scenarios, including one time when she was promised ice cream in exchange.

She estimated that the incidents began when she was in third grade and continued until mid-July on 2011.

Mendez initially denied ever touching the girl inappropriately, instead claiming that the girl began peeking at him in the shower and that he allowed her to touch him because she was curious.

The lead charge against Mendez, child molesting as a Class A felony, was dropped under his plea. In Indiana, allegations of child molesting can vary from intercourse to fondling, with intercourse being the highest-level offense.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said the girl was not able to remember the incident that led to the A felony charge.

March 12, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man charged with molesting 12-year-old girl

A Lafayette man is accused of having sexual contact with a 12-year-old girl -- and offering the girl's mom \$100 a week to "pay his debt for his mistake," court documents allege.

Eric T. Shamblin, 42, was charged this week in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with child molesting, a Class C felony.

He was booked into the Tippecanoe County Jail on Tuesday and released the same day, after posting a \$5,000 surety bond.

A published telephone number could not be found to reach Shamblin for comment.

The charge against him stems from an incident that occurred in September or October 2011. Shamblin is an acquaintance of the girl's mother.

The girl told her mother about the allegations in February.

According to a probable cause affidavit, the 12-year-old described one time when Shamblin lay on top of her and moved around while she was on the floor watching TV.

That was followed by another incident where they had been sitting on the couch and Shamblin allegedly put his hand through the opening her shorts.

Lafayette police spoke with Shamblin in early February. He allegedly gave incriminating statements that matched what the 12-year-old described.

About a week later, the girl's mother showed to Lafayette police a series of text messages sent to her from Shamblin's phone. That included a text where he allegedly offered to pay her \$100 a week for his "mistake."

March 8, 2012: WLFJ TV

DNA links murder suspect to crime Police: Suspect showed remorse

- Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - Lafayette police detectives said DNA evidence connects 38-year-old Richard Fouts with the murder of his grandfather, 84-year-old William Hartlep, last October.

Fouts didn't say a word as he walked in front of the camera. Moments later, he was charged with three felonies, murder, robbery with a deadly weapon, and murder while committing another felony.

"I think it's a relief as far as getting to this point where it's at," said Lafayette Det. B.T. Brown. "For the family, it's a big relief for them."

Brown said he's worked on the case each and every day since October 12, 2011, when Hartlep's body was found on the kitchen floor in a pool of blood. The house had been ransacked.

The big break came just a few weeks ago when DNA found at the scene matched Fouts' DNA.

"I won't say I was excited. I was relieved," Brown said. "I think at least we had something that we were working towards at that point."

Police said Fouts was already in jail on an unrelated burglary charge from the same time period of the murder.

Last week, he admitted to detectives he killed his grandfather.

Fouts told them he went to the house in October and woke up Hartlep demanding money. Fouts said the argument turned physical and he pushed the 84-year-old man to the floor and sat on his back. He told detectives he got a knife from the kitchen, which he later used to kill his grandfather. Then he ransacked the house to make it look like robbery.

Brown said Fouts was at the home for several hours.

Brown added Fouts appeared to show remorse during his confession.

Brown declined to say why Fouts needed the money, if he made away with any valuables or money, or if police were able to recover the knife.

"Even though the case is at the prosecutor's office and an arrest has been made, there's still some legal issues that we have to go through," Brown said.

Brown estimates police talked to more than 100 neighbors. He says a few were able to provide bits and pieces that helped detectives, but he wouldn't say what those were.

March 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Grandson charged in Lafayette man's stabbing death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

An Indianapolis man was after money when he went to his grandfather's Lafayette home in October and fatally stabbed him during an argument, court documents allege.

The suspect, 38-year-old Richard F. Fouts, was formally charged this morning in Tippecanoe Circuit Court with murder, felony murder and robbery while armed with a deadly weapon in the death of 84-year-old William E. Hartlep.

Fouts has been in Tippecanoe County Jail since late February, when he was arrested in an unrelated residential burglary in Lafayette.

Hartlep was found dead on Oct. 12, 2011, lying in a pool of blood on the kitchen floor of his home at 2213 Meadow Drive, off South 18th Street.

Fouts was identified as a suspect through forensic evidence.

According to a probable cause affidavit, Fouts is accused of going to Hartlep's home about midnight on Oct. 12 and waking up Hartlep. Fouts allegedly asked for money, but Hartlep told him to leave.

The two men argued, and Fouts allegedly pushed his grandfather to the ground and sat on his back. Fouts is accused of grabbing a knife from the kitchen and stabbing his grandfather, then ransacking Hartlep's home to make it appear like a robbery.

March 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Lafayette soldier pleads guilty to firing gunshots

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A disabled veteran from Lafayette has admitted to firing gunshots during an argument last August outside a south-end bar that resulted in gun wadding or other debris striking and injuring a passerby.

That admission came this morning, when 24-year-old Eric S. Braman pleaded guilty in Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 to criminal recklessness while armed with a deadly weapon.

Under a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, the Class D felony would be reduced to a misdemeanor.

Braman, an Army specialist who lost his lower right leg in September 2010 after being injured by a rocket-propelled grenade in Afghanistan, will be sentenced on May 9 by Judge Les Meade.

"You're very lucky Mr. Braman. If someone was hit, you wouldn't be here - you'd be upstairs facing a more serious charge," Meade said.

The charge stems from a confrontation on Aug. 27 outside End Zone Sports Bar & Grill, 2408 Veterans Memorial Parkway South. According to court documents, Braman was leaving End Zone when he became angry at a man he thought had been staring at him.

During Wednesday's plea hearing, Braman admitted that he fired two gunshots - one in the air, the other toward the ground. They were only meant to be "warning shots," Braman said.

At the same time, 31-year-old Andrew Studer of Lafayette, was leaving End Zone when something struck his left chest and knocked him to the ground. Investigators believe it was debris from the second gunshot.

Braman fled the scene afterward but later turned himself in at the Lafayette Police Department.

The arrest came the night before a homecoming ceremony and parade in downtown Lafayette to honor Braman's military service. Organizers canceled the parade, but local veterans still held a fish fry to raise money for Braman's family.

Braman spent 11 months at a Washington, D.C., hospital for physical therapy after losing his leg. He returned to Lafayette last August.

According to his attorney, Dan Moore, Braman currently is in the process of transitioning out of the military. Moore asked for Braman's sentencing hearing to be set 60 days out because of this.

March 7, 2012: WLFI TV

Grandson admits to murder of 84-year-old grandfather



- Patsy Schmidt

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The grandson of the 84-year-old victim killed in October 2011 was charged for murder and robbery Wednesday.

Late Thursday evening, Lafayette Police Department arrested 38-year-old Richard F. Fouts for the murder of William Hartlep on October 12, 2011 in Lafayette. He is being charged with 2 counts murder, one count robbery.

Hartlep was found stabbed to death in his home and his home was ransacked.

On March 1 and 2 of 2012, police said Fouts admitted to killing Hartlep.

Fouts said he went to Hartlep's home around midnight or later on the morning of October 12 and woke Hartlep. Fouts said he wanted money, but Hartlep told him to leave.

Fouts and Hartlep argued and Fouts pushed Hartlep to the floor and sat on his back.

Fouts said he saw a knife in the kitchen and he grabbed it.

Fouts told Hartlep he just needed some money. Fouts said he tried to get Hartlep to tell him where the money was and then he would leave.

Fouts admitted he used the knife to kill Hartlep. He then ransacked the house to make it look like a robbery.

Fouts said he also was looking for money and said he took some coins that he thought were dollar coins. He later found they were TRW coins and not real currency.

March 5, 2012: WLFI TV

Murder suspect pleads guilty



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFJ) - A Lafayette man, suspected of shooting and killing 26-year-old Clarence Smith last July, has pleaded guilty to murder.

The guilty plea for 22-year-old Michael Anthony Foster II was filed Monday in Tippecanoe Superior Court II. According to the plea agreement, Foster would plead guilty to an amended count I of Murder. In exchange, all of the remaining charges in the case would be dropped.

Foster's plea agreement states he would serve 50 years in prison for the crime, followed by five years on probation.

The plea agreement, signed by Foster, said Foster would testify truthfully at any hearing or trial involving the case, including trials for his co-defendants, Dartanyan Porche and Kevin Williams. The document said if he fails to do so, that would be considered a violation of his probation.

Foster also agreed to take a polygraph test to prove he is telling the truth in his admission of guilt.

Porche, Foster, and Williams are accused of luring Smith to an apartment for an alleged marijuana deal, but planned to rob him instead. In the process of the robbery, Smith was shot and killed.

March 5, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Man pleads guilty in southside shooting death

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette man pleaded guilty today to murder, admitting that he pulled the trigger during a failed robbery outside a south-end apartment last July that killed an acquaintance.

Michael A. Foster II, 21, was one of three people charged with murder, robbery and other felonies in the July 28 shooting death of 24-year-old Clarence W. Smith Jr.

Foster's plea in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 came one week before he was slated to stand trial.

He will be sentenced on April 4 by Judge Randy Williams.

Foster's co-defendants, 23-year-old Dartanyan Porche of West Lafayette and 22-year-old Kevin K. Williams of Lafayette will stand trial in April and June, respectively.

Under questions posed by his attorney, deputy public defender Michael Trueblood, and chief deputy prosecutor Kristen McVey, Foster admitted today that the three men discussed plans to lure Smith to 1840 Summertime Trail, near South 18th Street and Ortman Lane.

Smith showed up on the pretense of purchasing a gun.

Foster admitted pulling a gun on Smith and pulling the trigger.

Check back later for more on this developing story.

March 5, 2012: WLFI TV

Soldier pleads guilty to charges

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - An injured soldier from Lafayette pleaded guilty to criminal recklessness with a handgun.

Army Specialist Eric Braman was charged with criminal recklessness and carrying a handgun without a license.

He was arrested after firing shots outside of the End Zone Sports Bar in Lafayette.

According to documents, Braman said he was leaving the bar with his brother on August 27 when he got into an argument with another man because the man was allegedly staring at him.

Braman said he pulled out the gun, pointed it at his brother's head, but fired a shot into the air and at the ground.

One of the bullet fragments ricocheted off the pavement and hit another man in the shoulder.

Braman turned himself into police later that morning.

His sentencing is on May 9.

February 24, 2012: WLFI TV

Man faces 8 years for break-in to officer's home



- [Kristin Maiorano](#)

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces close to a decade in prison for breaking into a Lafayette Police officer's home.

18-year-old Robert Lovvorn, Jr., was sentenced Friday in Tippecanoe Superior Court to eight years in prison, followed by two years in community corrections.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Lovvorn broke into the officer's home in May, where he stole firearms, ammunition, a badge and electronic games. He said the two were neighbors, so Lovvorn knew it was an officer's home he was breaking into.

Lovvorn was later convicted of burglary and theft charges.

Man serves 10 yrs for break-in



- Krista Henery

Tippecanoe County, Ind. (WLFI) -

A man will serve a decade in prison for a break-in last summer, where he climbed into someone's window.

29-year-old Preston Hall was sentenced in Tippecanoe Superior Court Friday, to ten years in the Department of Corrections, followed by two years in community corrections and four years on probation.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Hall stole electronics and gaming equipment from a home, and police later found it in his hotel room.

He was charged with burglary and theft, and pleaded guilty to the burglary charge.

Man sentenced for meth lab fire

- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Dayton man faces more than a decade of prison time for his role in a meth lab that caused a house fire.

34-year-old William Wesner was sentenced in Tippecanoe Circuit Court Friday to 15 years in prison, followed by five years in Community Corrections. Wesner was convicted by a jury last month of seven charges, including dealing methamphetamine, possession of meth and neglect of a dependent.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Wesner and his wife were cooking meth in their Dayton home, with a 13-year-old in the house, when it started a fire. Harrington said at the time of the offense, Wesner was out on bond for possession of methamphetamine.

Wesner told the judge Friday he started using illegal drugs last year to "become closer to his wife." He admitted she was manufacturing meth, but denied knowing she was making it in their home.

His wife, Brandy Wesner, was previously sentenced to 30 years in the Department of Corrections for the same crimes.

Woman charged for alleged welfare fraud



- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette woman faces felony charges, for allegedly cheating the state out of thousands of dollars in food stamps.

37-year-old Latoya Christy Adams is charged in Tippecanoe County with welfare fraud and theft, both felonies.

According to court documents, Adams told social services that she was living with her brother and two children. An investigation found that her brother was incarcerated on a felony charge and her children were living with their father in New Orleans.

Documents also said Adams didn't report income from a job she held in 2009.

A representative from social services said Adams received nearly \$10,000 in food stamps she wasn't entitled to.

February 24, 2012: WLFI TV

Man faces 2 yrs for resisting officers



TIPPECANOE CO., Ind. (WLFI) - A man will serve prison time for a domestic situation that led to a run-in with police.

34-year-old Seth Bell was sentenced today to two years in prison and one year on probation. He had been convicted of resisting law enforcement, for an April 2011 incident, where he approached police officers in an aggressive manner. Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Bell tried to wrestle the officers to the ground, attempting to grab their weapons from their holsters.

February 21, 2012: WLFI TV

Basketball player D.J. Byrd formally charged with public intoxication



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office filed a formal charge of Public Intoxication on Tuesday against Purdue men's basketball standout DJ Byrd.

Byrd was arrested early Friday morning following an altercation at 'Where Else' Bar in West Lafayette.

Prosecutors quote Indiana State Trooper Ben Rector as saying he was driving on State Street when he saw a large fight in front of 'Where Else' Bar. As he approached the group, Trooper Rector said he saw one person in the middle of several people who were wearing 'Where Else' shirts. Rector said it appeared the person was trying to get away from the bar's employees.

Rector said he put the person into double-locked handcuffs, and then identified him as David Jonathan (DJ) Byrd. Rector said he could smell the odor of alcoholic beverages coming from Byrd.

At that point, Rector said several West Lafayette Police officers arrived at the bar and told him they had received a call about a fight there.

Rector said he spoke with a bar employee who told him there had been an altercation at the bar and employees were trying to remove Byrd.

The employee said Byrd bit him on the arm. Rector said he observed a small bite mark on the employee's right arm, but the employee did not want to file any charges against Byrd.

The employee told Rector he did not believe Byrd was part of the initial fight, but had "gotten himself involved within the altercation."

Byrd told Rector his friend had been grabbed by someone while inside 'Where Else' Bar. Byrd said he tried to help "remove that person from his friend." Byrd said that's when the 'Where Else' staff attempted to remove him from the bar.

Rector said Byrd performed a portable breath test, which said Byrd's blood alcohol content at the time was .219. The legal limit of intoxication for driving in Indiana is .08.

Rector said he informed Byrd that he was being arrested for Public Intoxication and Byrd was taken to the Tippecanoe County Jail.

Byrd was released from the jail around 8:30 a.m. Friday.

As a result of the altercation, Byrd served a one-game suspension on Sunday during the Michigan State game.

"I'm super excited to play. It's unfortunate everything that's happened. It's behind us now. I'm ready to come out and give it my all," said Byrd.

During the press conference Tuesday, Byrd addressed his arrest and how he is planning to move on from the incident.

"It's taking responsibility for your actions and being held accountable. I've moved on and I've learned.." said Byrd.

Teammate Kelsey Barlow, who was also involved in the altercation at 'Where Else' Bar, was kicked off the team.

February 17, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Complicity in death may cost woman 45 years

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Carolann R. Clear never explained, during her guilty plea Friday afternoon, why she and two acquaintances hastily decided to kill her boyfriend and bury his body in a shallow grave near Montmorenci.

But events that July 6, 2011, morning quickly escalated from a fight to plotting 26-year-old Jeremy K. Gibson's death, a tearful Clear told Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1.

"In the car, you heard Antonio Williams tell the victim he was going to kill him?" Prosecutor Pat Harrington asked. "And Jeremy Gibson begged for his life?"

"Yes," Clear, 20, quietly replied to each question.

Originally from Florida, Clear and her mother moved to Lafayette shortly after she met Gibson, and they moved into his apartment at 1018 N. Eighth St. near downtown Lafayette.

Her co-defendants, 25-year-old Antonio O.J. Williams of West Lafayette and 20-year-old Darren J. Englert of Lafayette, then moved into Gibson's apartment, too.

Clear pleaded guilty Friday to conspiracy to commit murder, a Class A felony -- admitting that she, Williams and Englert forced Gibson into a vehicle owned by Clear's mother and eventually stopped at a cornfield near U.S. 231 and County Road 500 North, where Gibson's body was found.

She also pleaded guilty to fraud, a Class D felony, admitting that she and Englert used Gibson's bank card to buy goods at a local Village Pantry hours later.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Clear faces 25 to 45 years in prison. Judge Williams can add five more years on probation to that.

A three-hour sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 17. The judge will decide then whether to accept Clear's plea agreement, which also means additional felonies -- among them, murder and criminal confinement -- could be dropped.

Members of Gibson's family declined to comment after Clear's guilty plea.

The hearing largely consisted of Clear answering questions from one of her attorneys, Deputy Public Defender Mike Trueblood, about what happened on July 6. The following is a summary of Clear's explanation:

Gibson, Williams and Englert got into a fight. Williams and Englert then allegedly tied up Gibson and forced him into the shower, Clear said. Williams later took Gibson out of the shower and -- with one of them holding a cloth belt around Gibson's neck -- forced him into a vehicle.

Williams, who was driving, then stopped at his godfather's home in West Lafayette and retrieved gardening tools that were used to beat Gibson. Williams then drove into rural parts of Tippecanoe County, eventually stopping near U.S. 231 and 500 North.

They parked and took Gibson across the street. Englert held onto Gibson while Williams and Clear carried the tools.

Clear then walked back toward the road to serve as lookout.

"At any time did you protest, try to stop this?" Trueblood asked.

"No," Clear replied.

Clear fingered both Williams and Englert in Gibson's beating and said it was apparently shortly after that she realized Gibson was dead. However, she did not walk toward his body to check for herself.

Williams and Englert then allegedly dug a small hole to bury Gibson, and they removed his clothing. Clear admitted that she suggested placing Gibson in a fetal position so he'd fit.

The trio then drove to the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge, where Williams and Englert tossed the gardening tools into the Wabash River. Clear said she threw Gibson's shoes into a nearby Dumpster there.

They went back to Gibson's apartment and tried to clean up the crime scene, which included trying to remove blood in the kitchen. Clear said Williams and Englert went back to where Gibson was buried and poured acid over his body.

Under her plea agreement, Clear already has provided Lafayette police detectives with a statement that fully detailed how they killed Gibson. She also must testify or provide depositions if and when Englert goes to trial.

Englert faces charges of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, fraud and several other felonies.

Williams died in January of lung complications, roughly 11 weeks after attempting to kill himself by overdosing on methadone. At the time, Williams was at Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, serving the remainder of a robbery conviction.

February 17, 2012: WLFI TV

Woman pleads guilty in Jeremy Gibson murder case

- Patsy Schmidt

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The girlfriend of a brutally murdered Lafayette man has pleaded guilty to the crime Friday afternoon.

This was a hearing that was hastily scheduled over the past few days.

20-year-old CarolAnn Clear appeared this afternoon before Tippecanoe Superior Judge Randy Williams, where she admitted to helping two men kill her boyfriend, Jeremy Gibson, last summer.

Clear and her attorneys submitted a plea agreement they made with the state of Indiana.

In the agreement, Clear pleads guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Murder, a Class A felony, and Fraud, a Class D felony.

In exchange, the other seven felony charges against her would be dropped, including a murder charge.

In court Friday, Clear's attorney asked her questions, and she tearfully described how she acted as a lookout while Antonio Williams and Darren Englert beat Jeremy Gibson to death.

She also described going to a Village Pantry store with Englert the next day, where they used Gibson's bank card to buy several items.

Several members of Gibson's family were in court Friday, many in tears during Clear's testimony.

We asked if they had any reaction to Clear's guilty plea, and they didn't want to comment on it at this time.

Under the plea agreement, Clear could face a range of 25 to 45 years in prison, and all of that time would be executed.

Judge Williams said he could add an additional five years of probation onto any prison time.

He did not accept or reject the plea agreement Friday, but said he would make that decision at Clear's sentencing hearing.

That hearing is set for the morning of May 17.

In July, police said the crime started with an argument between Gibson and Williams at 1018 North 8th Street in Lafayette.

Police said 26-year-old Gibson was beaten, then taken to a field in Tippecanoe County where he was beaten again. This time was with a pick axe and shovel, then buried in that field.

Police soon arrested Antonio Williams, Darren Englert and Carol Clear for the crime.

In September, Gibson's family learned that Williams had been released more than a year early from the Indiana Department of Corrections for a prior conviction.

Since then, Gibson's family attorney filed a notice claiming Gibson's murder was a result of wrongful death.

Williams was being held in the Miami Correctional Facility and facing charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

February 16, 2012: WLFI TV

WL man faces more than 10 criminal charges



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A man living in West Lafayette faces more than ten criminal charges for dealing marijuana.

18-year-old Christopher Mar faces 11 charges, including dealing and possession of marijuana, corrupt business influence, and money laundering.

According to court documents, police intercepted a delivery to Mar from California last November.

The shipment was a box with marijuana inside.

Undercover officers delivered the package to Mar at an apartment on North River Road.

A subsequent investigation of the apartment turned up nearly 30,000 dollars in money orders.

The documents said Mar was caught selling marijuana again earlier this month.

February 15, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Tipster awarded \$1K in unsolved White County homicide

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Anonymous crime tip hot line WeTip is awarding \$1,000 to the person who implicated Jason B. Forrest in the unsolved homicide of a retired Monticello schoolteacher three years ago, WeTip announced today.

Forrest, now 22, pleaded guilty in May 2011 to murder and burglary resulting in serious bodily injury and was sentenced to 76 years in prison. He admitted to beating and stabbing 67-year-old Judith A. Claypool on Dec. 29, 2008, during a botched attempt to steal her vehicle, which was parked outside her home near Lake Shafer.

Claypool's death remained unsolved for nearly two years.

During that time, White County Prosecutor Bob Guy partnered with Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington to use WeTip, a California-based service that Tippecanoe County paid to join in June 2008, to help generate leads.

White County then joined WeTip in February 2010.

Forrest was charged in November 2010 after someone called WeTip and provided details about his possible involvement and the weapon he used. That tip was confirmed after Forrest's DNA came back as a match to blood found in Claypool's vehicle.

His DNA was in a criminal database for prior convictions, including a June 2009 burglary conviction in White County.

All calls made to WeTip are anonymous and cannot be traced. The person being awarded for implicating Forrest is WeTip caller 546920.

The tipster's reward marks \$1,000,000 that WeTip has handed out since the hot line was created in 1972.

February 8, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Former real estate broker found guilty on 12 counts of forgery



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Tippecanoe Circuit Court judge has issued guilty verdicts for 12 counts of forgery in the trial of a former Lafayette real estate agent accused of falsifying sales disclosure records in order to avoid property taxes.

Judge Don Daniel issued his verdict immediately after lawyers finished closing arguments late this afternoon. He found Brenda K. Hatfield not guilty of one count of corrupt business influence. All charges were C felonies.

Today's proceedings included playback of videotaped recordings in which Hatfield answered questions posed by two police detectives and her attorney, Kent Moore.

In the recordings, Hatfield explained how she filled out forms and how assistants allegedly forged the signatures of "buyers" who actually were renters.

Renters testified Tuesday they discovered they were listed as buyers only when they saw their names in property sales listings in the Journal & Courier.

Properties that are owner occupied, even when sold on contract, are taxed considerably lower than rental properties, under Indiana law.

Hatfield formerly worked in the offices of Coldwell Banker Shook and let properties on the side with her husband.

For more on this story, see Thursday's Journal & Courier and check back with jconline.com.

February 7, 2012: WLFI TV

Real estate broker convicted of 12 felonies

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - The judge comes to his verdict for former Lafayette real estate broker Brenda Hatfield.

43-year-old Hatfield has been found guilty of 12 felony charges of forgery and not guilty on one charge of business corruption.

Prosecutors said Hatfield had her assistants forge signatures on land contracts so she could obtain tax breaks.

The state called more than a dozen people to the stand who say they did not sign land contracts and did not give permission for Hatfield to do so.

Hatfield said she never instructed her two assistants to forge the signatures.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said, "Lafayette police did a wonderful job on this case."

Hatfield faces up to 10 years in prison and 10,000 dollars in fines.

Hatfield's sentencing is set for March 30, 2012.

February 7, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Testimony outlines alleged property tax dodge

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Kelli Stump admitted Tuesday that she wasn't coerced or promised any perks from Brenda K. Hatfield, her former boss at Coldwell Banker Shook in Lafayette, when she forged signatures on documents that would have qualified Hatfield for significant tax breaks on her rental properties.

And though she felt uneasy about it, Stump further admitted that she signed the names of Hatfield's renters onto land contracts and sales disclosures anyway.

"Because Brenda was my boss, she was my friend ... and because she owned my house," Stump testified in Tippecanoe Circuit Court. "There were a lot of factors."

Stump was among the witnesses called by the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office to testify against Hatfield, 43, during the first day of Hatfield's bench trial before Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel.

Hatfield, a former real estate broker, is charged with one count of corrupt business influence and 12 counts of forgery. All 13 counts are Class C felonies.

The charges against her are not related to her employment at Coldwell Shook, but rather, properties that she and her husband, Greg, owned and listed for rent in Tippecanoe County.

The charges stem from an investigation that began in March 2010 after some of Hatfield's tenants learned that their names were listed in the Journal & Courier under property sale disclosures.

The information indicated they had purchased the properties they were actually renting, which was news to them.

The J&C publishes property sale information, gathered from disclosure forms filed with the Tippecanoe County assessor's office, most Sundays.

Daniel, who will decide whether Hatfield is guilty, heard from a number of those tenants Tuesday.

Hatfield's attorney, Kent Moore, is arguing that prosecutors cannot prove that Hatfield was involved in a "pattern of racketeering," as the charges imply.

Deputy Prosecutor Kevin McDaniel is presenting the case for the state.

According to Detective Mike Humphrey of the Lafayette Police Department, who also testified on Tuesday, Hatfield's accountant had told her sometime in 2009 that she could lower her tax liability by converting her rental properties to owner-occupied.

Land contracts are one way of doing that.

Hatfield reportedly had planned to meet with her tenants sometime in late 2009 to get the necessary signatures. But, one day before a Jan. 5, 2010, deadline, Hatfield instead had her assistants sign the paperwork, court documents allege.

Both assistants, Stump and Korilynn Perdue, testified to that on Tuesday.

All three were seated around a table when Hatfield pulled out paperwork that she allegedly asked them to sign.

After news of the alleged scheme came to light, Stump said Hatfield told her to "keep my mouth shut," which Stump interpreted as not speaking to police. She admitted Tuesday to initially withholding information from investigators.

"Wasn't this a choice?" Moore asked Stump. "You didn't have to sign. ... Isn't this a reflection of your own character?"

"I guess it is," Stump replied.

Stump took over Hatfield's portfolio at Coldwell Shook after Hatfield, an independent contractor at the time, left there. Perdue then served as Stump's assistant. Stump said she stayed on at Coldwell Banker for a year afterward.

The trial will continue this morning. Daniel is expected to listen to a two-hour recording of Hatfield's interviews with police.

Upon conviction, each Class C felony is punishable by two to eight years incarceration.

The forgery counts would likely fall under the corrupt business influence charge.

February 3, 2012: WLFI TV

We-Tip hotline best in the U.S.

- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Tippecanoe County's We-Tip program is the most successful in the United States, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Lafayette Police confirmed, anonymous tips come in about every day to the police department. In some instances, the We-Tip hotline has even helped police solve cases.

It was the end of 2008 when the Lafayette Police Department was investigating a series of robberies at Village Pantry convenience stores, the main piece of evidence surveillance footage from the Main Street location.

"We didn't have any leads at all, until we put voice on Channel 18, and the We-Tips just started coming in with this lady's name," said Lafayette Police Lieutenant Tom Davidson.

Davidson said Jacqueline Aper was subsequently arrested and convicted for the crime. Davidson said the We-Tip hotline continues to be a great tool for his department, which usually received about a dozen tips a week.

"They range from all different types of cases, from vandalisms to, probably the majority is drug cases, even up to the homicides," he said.

"In the history of We-Tip, not one person has ever been identified to any law enforcement agency," said Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington. "It's completely anonymous."

Harrington said that anonymity is likely the key to We-Tip's success. He said community members may be more willing to report crime if they know they're not speaking directly to police. But he said We-Tip has become so successful, local police are almost victims of their own success.

"Sometimes a person has called back and said, 'I reported this place for drug activity, and it's still going on. Why haven't police stopped it?' Well, it does take an investigation," Harrington said.

Harrington said We-Tip use has stayed pretty steady in the nearly four years since it launched here, though reporting of gang activity has increased. He said 68 percent of We-Tip calls are related to drug crime. However, tips cover all types of offenses.

If you'd like to report crime in your area, you can call the We-Tip hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME.

February 3, 2012: WLFI TV

Two charged in credit card forgery

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Two men face more than 10 felony charges in Tippecanoe County, for allegedly attempting to make hundreds of dollars in charges on another man's credit card.

43-year-old Jerry Wayne Smith and 34-year-old Ricky Cox are charged with multiple counts of forgery, theft, and fraud.

Court documents say a man filed a police report after fraudulent charges showed up on his credit card the day after some friends stayed at his home. The group included a man he didn't know.

Police said Cox left his birth certificate at Sears, after the victim's card was denied when he tried to use it to pay for some tires and an oil change.

February 3, 2012: WLFI TV

Former Blue Fin cook charged for forgery



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A former cook at Lafayette's Blue Fin Bistro restaurant faces six felony charges, for allegedly forging multiple checks from his employer.

26-year-old Nicholas Burroughs' charges include three counts each of forgery and theft.

Court documents say a manager at Blue Fin reported to police that at least two checks had been stolen from the restaurant and forged, totaling about \$6,000.

A police investigation found security footage of what appeared to be Burroughs cashing the checks at a Huntington Bank.

February 3, 2012: WLFI TV

Purdue student charged in drug case



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Purdue student now faces multiple felony charges, after a police K-9 allegedly found pills and marijuana in his dorm room.

19-year-old Joseph Tucker's charges include dealing and possession of a schedule III controlled substance, possession of a narcotic drug and dealing in marijuana.

Court documents say police found marijuana and close to 100 pills in his dorm room, including Hydrocodone and Oxycodone. Police said Tucker admitted all the illegal material in the room belonged to him, and admitted to trading and selling the pills and marijuana since the fall semester.

Charges imply marijuana was couple's business



By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A West Lafayette couple's alleged marijuana growing operation was so well-organized and expansive that, in some aspects, it resembled a business, court documents allege.

That is what led the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office to charge 25-year-old Evan B. Mooneyhan and his wife, 24-year-old Amanda M. Mooneyhan, this week with offenses more commonly associated with white-collar crimes: corrupt business influence, a Class C felony, and money laundering, a Class D felony.

They also were charged with felony counts of conspiracy to deal marijuana, dealing in marijuana and possession of marijuana.

"There were maps we found with grow places plotted and codes we had to decipher," said Detective Jon Eager of the West Lafayette Police Department, who signed the Mooneyhans' charges filed Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2. "We're talking miles and miles apart. They did their homework when it came to hiding the marijuana.

"Personally, this was not something that I have seen before."

A published telephone number could not be found Wednesday to reach the Mooneyhans for comment.

Charges against them stem from their arrests last August, following a joint investigation by the Hamilton-Boone County Drug Task Force and Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force.

At the time, Eager was on Tippecanoe County's task force.

Here's a summary of what investigators say took place, according to a probable cause affidavit:

The Hamilton-Boone drug task force arranged a marijuana buy between a confidential informant and a Hamilton County dealer for 1 pound of marijuana. The alleged purchase took place in Tippecanoe County on Aug. 17.

That day, the informant and dealer went to the Mooneyhans' home on County Road 500 West. Amanda Mooneyhan is the dealer's cousin.

Police got a search warrant and went to the Mooneyhans' house on Aug. 18. They recovered multiple items commonly associated with growing marijuana, including a special lamp, rolling papers, marijuana pipes, a grinder and multiple scales.

Also found was a map indicating several locations in Tippecanoe, Benton, Warren and White counties where marijuana plants were harvested.

Investigators then got together with Indiana State Police and flew over those locations in a helicopter. Ten separate locations - and 179 plants - were found.

Eager said Wednesday that it's difficult to put a dollar amount on the marijuana recovered. A pound can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$7,000, depending on quality.

Location matters, too. The most common street buy, for one-eighth of a ounce, varies from \$60 near the Purdue University campus to \$20 elsewhere in Tippecanoe County, Eager said.

The Mooneyhans were originally arrested in August on suspicion of dealing in marijuana and possession of marijuana. Warrants for their re-arrest were issued Tuesday with the new charges.

The delay in charges is likely due to time needed to test the marijuana.

Rather than sending an entire plant, troopers will randomly tear off leaves from several recovered plants to send for testing, state police Sgt. Kim Riley said.

January 28, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Apology delivered, sincerity doubted -- 22-year sentence for fatal hit-and-run

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Friday morning was the first time that Ebony Knight's family heard directly from the man who ran over and killed the Wea Ridge Middle School student 11 months ago, then fled the scene.

Through tears, Robert V. Kirts II of Lafayette told Knight's family that he hates himself for what happened on Feb. 27, 2011, the night he drove home, after drinking with friends, and struck the 15-year-old from behind on Indiana 25 West.

"I do not know if I could ever forgive somebody for doing this to my kid," Kirts, a 43-year-old father of two, said during his sentencing hearing in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1. "To take somebody's child from them, I will never forgive myself.

" ... Ebony, you will never be forgotten."

Superior Court 1 Judge Randy Williams sentenced Kirts to 22 years in prison, followed by three years on supervised probation. He faced a maximum of 28 years incarceration.

Kirts' apology, however, meant little to Knight's family members and friends who filled the courtroom's gallery. They said afterward that they doubted Kirts' sincerity.

"I don't think he was remorseful," said Natoya Roberts, one of Knight's cousins. "I think he used the whole 'I'm sorry. I need rehabilitation' just for today, just to get less time.

"Maybe if he had stopped his car, maybe if he had called the police -- that would have showed that he cared."

What wasn't noted

Williams wasn't impressed by Kirts, either. The judge noted that Kirts, when reading his apology, skirted the issue of intoxication. As part of his sentence, Kirts also must complete 420 hours of community service and pay more than \$7,000 in restitution, which will reimburse Knight's family for funeral costs.

"Taking the responsibility for what? The fact that he was drunk when he did it, or that he hit a little girl, and she died?" Williams asked.

Kirts said Friday that he was distracted, either by searching for his phone or messing with his car radio, when he hit Knight. He did not respond to the judge's question.

"Too often we bring together grieving families because of alcohol. ... It's got to stop," Williams said.

On Feb. 27, Knight and a cousin, Levaria Bryant, had walked from their home off Indiana 25 West to the nearby Walgreens off Old U.S. 231 South to buy a binder and other school supplies.

They were walking back home -- Knight on the shoulder, closest to the road -- when she was struck from behind by Kirts' Jeep Liberty. Knight was pushed onto the Jeep's hood, then fell. Kirts ran over her body but did not stop.

He was arrested on Feb. 28 after a Lafayette police officer drove through south-end neighborhoods in search of a vehicle that matched the one that hit Knight. The Jeep, with extensive damage to the hood, front grill and passenger side headlight and wheel, was parked outside Kirts' home in Royal Oaks Estate Mobile Home Park.

A Walgreens receipt and blood that came back as a match to Knight were found in the Jeep's suspension and undercarriage.

Deputy Prosecutor John Schafer had to rely on witness testimony from people who drank with or served Kirts alcohol on Feb. 27 to prove that Kirts, who has a history of alcohol and substance abuse, was intoxicated.

His attorneys, deputy public defenders Rachael Schexnailder and Michael Trueblood, tried to dispute that during trial.

Jurors, however, agreed with Schafer. They found Kirts guilty of operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death, a Class C felony; failure to stop after an accident causing death, a Class C felony; and failure to give notice of a serious accident, a Class C misdemeanor.

Kirts then pleaded guilty to OWI while having a prior conviction and causing death, a Class B felony. Jurors could not deliberate on that count because prior convictions typically cannot be introduced during the first phase of a criminal trial.

'11 months'

During his apology, Kirts specifically addressed Bryant, who witnessed the event and described during trial how the impact knocked Knight out of her boots.

Bryant said she struggled to sleep for several weeks afterward. Because of this, Roberts, who is Knight's cousin and Bryant's aunt, moved to Lafayette from Chicago.

"We feel like 25 isn't enough. He should have got the maximum," Roberts said.

Another cousin, Lavelle Banks of Chicago, said, "If you're drinking, you shouldn't be driving. I feel his pain and everything, but it will never bring back my baby."

Knight's father, who attended part of Kirts' trial, was unable to attend Friday's sentencing because of complications from diabetes. The family said that he cries every day from losing his daughter.

"I have to see my father still cry to this day, and it's been 11 months," Knight's sister, Danielle Knight, testified. "He took my sister's life away. I know that he has a family ... but he took someone that was very special to us."

Kirts is planning to appeal his conviction and sentence.

Schexnailder said Kirts' history of substance abuse stems from abuse when he was younger. Losing his wife sent him further downward, she said.

Burglar spared prison

A Lafayette man has been spared prison time for his involvement in a residential burglary two years ago where handguns were stolen.

Benigno Astorga-Quiroga, 21, pleaded guilty in October to burglary, a Class B felony, and criminal gang activity, a Class D felony.

Judge Randy Williams of Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 sentenced him on Friday to eight years on community corrections -- some combination of work release, home detention and day reporting -- and four years on probation.

Astorga-Quiroga had no prior criminal history.

The charges stemmed from a burglary on Jan. 28, 2010, on Crowfoot Drive on Lafayette's south end by members of a gang called The Southside 13. Astorga-Quiroga drove the getaway car.

Eleven shotguns and rifles were among the items stolen.

One of those guns was used by another teenager, Juan Manual Correa, to fire a shot into the ceiling during a Feb. 21 wedding reception at the Conservation Club of Tippecanoe County.

No one was injured.

Correa, leader of The Southside 13, was sentenced earlier this month to 22 years in prison after pleading guilty to all seven charges he faced.

Ten of the stolen firearms have since been recovered.

January 27, 2012: WLFI TV

2 men face new charges for break-ins



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - Two Lafayette men who are already facing charges of breaking into businesses on Lafayette's south side face new charges in break-ins at seven other businesses.

20-year-old Michael Billups and 19-year-old Michael Moutry are accused of breaking into restaurants, liquor stores, and a laundromat on the night of August 14.

They're each charged with 13 felony counts, including burglary and theft.

In November, Billups and Moutry were charged with breaking into a KFC restaurant and an auto dealership on Teal Road.

January 27, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Drunken driver given 22 years for fatal hit-and-run

Robert V. Kirts II received a 22-year prison sentence this morning in Tippecanoe County Superior Court 1 for driving drunk on Feb. 27, 2011, when he struck and killed 15-year-old Ebony Knight.

With credit for good behavior and time already served, Kirts could be released from prison in 10 years. When he is released, he'll have three years of supervised probation.

Kirts was convicted Nov. 17 of operating a vehicle while intoxicated causing death, a Class B felony, failure to stop after an accident causing death, a Class C felony, and failure to give notice of serious accident, a Class C misdemeanor. He also pleaded guilty to operating a vehicle while intoxicated with previous OWI convictions, a Class B felony.

January 27, 2012: WLFI TV

Two charged in armed robbery case



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man and teenager each face felony charges, for allegedly pointing a gun at another man's face and stealing money from him.

20-year-old Nicholas Jackson is charged with three felonies in Tippecanoe County: Robbery, Intimidation and Theft. He also faces misdemeanors for Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor and Carrying a Handgun Without a License.

A 16-year-old boy was charged with the same three felonies, as well as Carrying a Handgun Without a License.

Court documents say the pair walked up to a man Jackson knew in Munger Park Wednesday, showed him a semi-automatic handgun and asked him if he thought it was real. When the victim said "no," Jackson allegedly cocked the gun, pointed it in the man's face and told him to give them his money, which he did.

January 27, 2012: WLFI TV

Hit & run driver learns his fate

A man accused of hitting and killing a teenage girl with his SUV learned his fate Friday.

A judge just handed down Kirts' sentence ordering him to serve 25 years, 22 years executed with 3 years of supervised probation including random drug screening.

53-year-old Robert Kirts was found guilty in November on three charges of Operating A Vehicle While Intoxicated, Resulting In Death.

15-year-old Ebony Knight was killed by Kirts' SUV when she was hit while walking with her cousin on State Road 25 West in February 2011.

His probation will include 420 hours of community service.

Kirts was also ordered to pay 7,000 dollars to the family of Ebony Knight to cover funeral expenses.

We'll have reaction from the courtroom Friday night on NewsChannel 18 at Five.

January 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

2 break-in suspects linked to seven more

Two Lafayette men already charged with breaking into a fast food restaurant and grocery store by climbing into drive-through windows have been linked to seven more business burglaries, court documents allege.

Michael R. Billups, 20, and Michael J. Moutry, 19, were charged Thursday in Tippecanoe Superior 2 with attempted burglary, a Class C felony; six counts of burglary, a Class C felony; and six counts of theft, a Class C felony.

They're accused of breaking into Logan's Roadhouse, D&R Market, Long John Silver, Scrub-A-Duds, Tower Liquors, Penguin Liquors and Frozen Custard -- all located in Lafayette -- last August and September.

According to a probable cause affidavit, a combined \$15,783 was stolen from the businesses, along with a computer, cigarettes, lottery tickets and other miscellaneous items.

Detective Herb Robinson of the Lafayette Police Department said Billups and Moutry became suspects in those break-ins when they were interviewed following their arrests last November.

They were two of three people arrested after someone broke into Kentucky Fried Chicken at 2711 Teal Road and the nearby Tienda Momax, 2777 Teal Road, on Nov. 16.

Police arrived at the KFC when two of the suspects were still inside.

Robinson said Thursday that investigators don't believe Billups and Moutry are linked to any other open burglaries.

January 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Jury convicts Dayton man on meth charges

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Dayton man whose home caught fire last year following a methamphetamine lab explosion faces significant prison time after being found guilty Wednesday of dealing the caustic, highly addictive drug.

A Tippecanoe Circuit Court jury found William F. Wesner, 33, guilty of all seven charges against him: dealing meth; possession of meth; information of an illegal drug lab; neglect of a dependent; maintaining a common nuisance; possession of paraphernalia; and conspiracy to deal cocaine.

Wesner will be sentenced at a later date by Judge Don Daniel.

Sheffield Township firefighters were called to Wesner's home at 283 Washington St. on June 10 after neighbors called 911 to report an explosion, followed by a fire.

Wesner was found outside, garden hose in hand, trying to extinguish the fire. He had cuts to his back from breaking a window.

Items that investigators found in Wesner's basement included drain opener or sulfuric acid; a plastic bottle containing white and pink residue that tested positive for meth; a funnel with powder that tested positive for meth; and a burned container of salt.

Elsewhere in the home, investigators found marijuana, digital scales, white pills believed to be pseudoephedrine and an HCL generator.

Pseudoephedrine is an ingredient in some cold and sinus medication that is commonly used to cook meth. An HCL generator is any container, typically a propane tank, used to mix acid and salt to produce hydrogen chloride gas, an ingredient in meth production.

The neglect charge was due to Wesner's 13-year-old stepson being home at the time.

According to court documents, the boy told investigators that he believed some drug dealing had been taking place and that he hadn't been in the basement in two years.

It was the third fire at the home, the boy said.

The lead meth dealing charge against Wesner was a Class A felony because of his home's proximity to a day care facility, where 11 children had been when the explosion occurred. That count alone is punishable by 20 to 50 years in prison.

Wesner's wife, Brandy Wesner, has pleaded guilty to similar charges. She had been expected to testify on her husband's behalf, but that did not take place.

January 26, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Car dealer Firestone pleads guilty to theft, forgery

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette used car dealer, accused of having an employee forge customers' signatures to obtain approval for auto loans, chose not to take his chances with a jury.

Steven M. Firestone, 57, had been slated to stand trial beginning Tuesday in Tippecanoe Circuit Court on charges that included corrupt business influence, six counts of theft, four counts of counterfeiting and two counts of check fraud.

But court records show that Firestone pleaded guilty earlier this month to two counts of forgery, a Class C felony, and theft, a Class D felony.

Under his plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, the remaining charges could be dropped. It would require that Firestone's sentences for the charges be stacked, rather than merged.

Judge Don Daniel will decide on Feb. 24, the date of Firestone's sentencing hearing, whether to accept the plea agreement.

Firestone is the owner of Firestone Auto Sales at 1501 Schuyler Ave.

In October 2010, Firestone and employee James T. Gerber were arrested and charged after a lengthy investigation by the Lafayette Police Department.

Gerber pleaded guilty last year to two counts of counterfeiting, a Class D felony -- admitting that he forged customers' signatures on Firestone's orders in August 2008.

He gained nothing, not even commission for selling the cars, by doing so.

Firestone alone was accused of passing bad checks to purchase vehicles from Indianapolis and not providing titles to about 25 customers who bought cars from Firestone Auto Sales. He faces two to eight years behind bars on each forgery count, and 18 months to three years for theft.

January 23, 2012: WLFI TV

Man charged for dealing look alike drug



- Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces felony charges, for allegedly selling Xanax pills to an undercover police officer.

23-year-old Curtis Matthew Howard is charged in Tippecanoe County with six felonies, including Dealing in a Schedule IV Controlled Substance, Possession of a Schedule IV Controlled Substance, and Dealing in a Look Alike Substance.

Court documents say Howard sold Xanax pills to a police officer on multiple occasions. He also allegedly told the officer he had sold him heroin, but a lab test showed the powder contained no controlled substances. The officer said Howard told her the substance was "fire" and was the heroin people were dying from.

Howard also faces a sentencing enhancement for being a Habitual Substance Offender.

January 20, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Woman gets 6 years for nearly smothering son

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette woman who admitted to nearly smothering her 3-year-old son to protect him from "aliens" was sentenced this morning to six years in prison, followed by two years on probation and psychological treatment.

Senora L. Wheeler, 25, pleaded guilty but mentally ill last month to neglect of a dependent causing serious bodily, a Class B felony. Her plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office called for a sentence between six and 10 years in prison.

On Nov. 28, 2009, Lafayette police found Wheeler lying facedown and stretched out under a pine tree at Union Street and Earl Avenue with her two daughters and a niece huddled beside her.

It wasn't until officers lifted Wheeler that they spotted her son, Melvin Moon Jr., under her. The boy was unconscious and had no pulse.

The lack of oxygen severely damaged Melvin Jr.'s brain, and the boy, now 5 years old, has limited mental capacity. He requires a ventilator to help him breathe, an Indiana Department of Child Services worker testified today during Wheeler's sentencing hearing in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2.

Melvin Jr. is in the care of his father, Melvin Moon Sr.

Wheeler has been diagnosed with multiple mental illnesses, including schizophrenia and disassociative disorder. During her guilty plea hearing, Wheeler said she had been hearing voices in the days before Nov. 28, 2009, and thought that aliens were after her family.

She got on top of her son because he was making noise.

Wheeler testified today that she would never had done it had she been in her right mind.

January 20, 2012: WLFI TV

Two charged in crack cocaine case

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Tippecanoe County man and woman face felony charges, for allegedly obtaining crack cocaine for an undercover officer.

34-year-old Lee Bowen and 48-year-old Diana Goble were charged in Tippecanoe County Friday with dealing in cocaine, conspiracy to commit dealing in cocaine, and other charges. Both also face sentencing enhancements for being habitual substance offenders.

According to court documents, police received Bowen's number from a confidential informant. Bowen took an undercover officer to meet Goble, who allegedly gave them crack cocaine.

January 20, 2012: WLFI TV

Mom says body possessed by aliens made her nearly smother son



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A mother was sentenced Friday after she said alien possession of her body made her nearly smother her son.

Officers found Senora Wheeler lying on top of her 3-year-old son outside.

According to doctors, the son had been in cardiac arrest for about 45 minutes.

Wheeler said aliens were talking to her. She said they took her soul and possessed her body. She said her body was then thrown over her son.

Wheeler was committed at Wabash Valley Hospital and then Logansport State Hospital.

Wheeler pled guilty to Neglect of a Dependent Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury, a B felony.

She was sentenced to 8 years in the Indiana Department of Correction. Court ordered 2 years be suspended on supervised probation, including psychological treatment.

Wheeler said she loved her son and would never have done this had she been in her right mind. She stated she was the only person to blame.

She has had no prior adult convictions and has been diagnosed with multiple different mental illnesses.

The son is in the custody of his father since the offense.

January 19, 2012: RTV 6 – The Indy Channel

Man Dies Before Trial In Grisly Fatal Beating Coroner: Man Had Problems After Methadone Overdose



An Indiana coroner said a West Lafayette man awaiting trial in the death of a man fatally beaten with a pickax or a shovel died this week from complications of a drug overdose.

Deputy Miami County Coroner John Boyer said Antonio O.J. Williams, 25, suffered lung problems in an October methadone overdose that ultimately led to his death Monday at a Peru hospital after he was rushed from the Miami Correctional Facility.

The Journal & Courier reported that Williams had been scheduled to stand trial in May for the July 2011 beating death of Jeremy K. Gibson, 26, of Lafayette.

Williams and two other people-- Carolann Clear and Darren Englert -- allegedly forced Gibson from his apartment and drove him to a rural location where he was fatally beaten and buried in a shallow grave.

Police said the three poured acid on Gibson's body in hopes of preventing authorities from identifying the remains.

January 19, 2012: WLFI TV

Man faces battery charges Man accused of hitting pregnant girlfriend



TIPPECANOE COUNTY, Ind. (WFLI) - A man accused of repeatedly hitting his pregnant girlfriend now faces several criminal charges.

Nicholas Herget, 18, of Lafayette, is charged with criminal recklessness and several counts of battery.

According to court documents, Herget's girlfriend told police that she had bruises all over her body because of Herget. She told officers that last month, Herget pushed her onto the kitchen floor, got on top of her, pulled out a kitchen knife, and placed the tip of the blade against her throat.

That's when he allegedly told her, "You're lucky that I don't kill you."

Detectives said Herget admitted to them he hit his girlfriend and blamed his aggressive behavior on her continually nagging and annoying him.

January 18, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

22 years for Southside 13 gang member

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

A Lafayette teenager who is part of a gang called The Southside 13 has been sentenced to 22 years in prison for the gang's involvement in a home burglary and shooting at a wedding reception two years ago.

Juan Manuel Correa Jr., 18, pleaded guilty in November to all seven counts against him: conspiracy to commit burglary, a Class B felony; burglary, a Class B felony; theft, a Class D felony; intimidation, a Class C felony; criminal recklessness, a Class D felony; pointing a firearm, a Class D felony; and criminal gang sentence, which is an enhancement.

He was sentenced Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 by Judge Randy Williams.

Correa's prison sentence will be followed by four years on community corrections and five years on probation. He also was ordered to pay \$500 in restitution.

The charges stemmed from a burglary on Jan. 28, 2010, on Crowfoot Drive on Lafayette's south end. Eleven shotguns and rifles were among the items stolen.

Correa used one of those firearms to shoot into the ceiling at Conservation Club of Tippecanoe County during a Feb. 21, 2010, wedding reception that he and other friends crashed. No one was injured.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said 10 of the 11 guns have since been recovered.

Mom admits causing child's head injuries

A Lafayette woman admitted to causing a skull fracture, cerebral hemorrhaging and retinal bleeding that hospitalized her 2-month-old daughter last summer.

Miranda R. Moore, 20, pleaded guilty Thursday morning in Tippecanoe County's magistrate court to one count of neglect of a dependent resulting in serious bodily injury, a Class B felony.

According to court documents, a date for Moore's sentencing will be set today.

On the day of the sentencing, Tippecanoe Circuit Court Judge Don Daniel will decide whether or not to accept her plea.

Moore's daughter, identified in court documents by the initials, L.M., spent about three weeks last August and September at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital at St. Vincent in Indianapolis.

She was placed in foster care after her release.

Lafayette police were first called to Moore's apartment in Claystone at the Crossing on Aug. 27 because the 2-month-old had shallow and labored breathing. The infant spent two days at St. Elizabeth East hospital before being transferred to Peyton Manning Children's Hospital, where she underwent surgery.

According to court documents, Moore initially claimed the girl bumped her head in the bathtub and later said she tripped while holding her daughter.

Doctors told investigators that the girl's injuries were consistent with a hard impact and excessive shaking.

Because of the baby's age, it's nearly impossible to say whether she'll suffer from any long-term injuries, Detective Joe Clyde of the Lafayette Police Department said this week.

Clyde said the girl is expected to live with her father, who lives out of state.

Woman admits trying to obstruct trial

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

Sharnetta M. Barnes now admits that she pretended to work in the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office when she called a key witness in her then-boyfriend's armed robbery case and told him the trial was postponed.

Barnes, of Dolton, Ill., also admits to using a "SpoofCard" service that made the witness' cellphone caller ID display read (765) 423-9305 -- the general number for the prosecutor's office.

But at the time, she hadn't realized how wrong her actions were, the 24-year-old told Judge Les Meade of Tippecanoe Superior Court 5 on Tuesday.

"Well, honestly, I never really thought about how serious it was," Barnes said.

When pressed by Meade about why she did it, Barnes replied:

"I just thought the case would get dismissed."

Barnes pleaded guilty on Tuesday to attempted obstruction of justice, a Class D felony, and impersonating a public servant, a Class A misdemeanor.

Under a plea agreement with the prosecutor's office, an identical count of impersonating a public servant could be dropped. But the length of Barnes' sentence -- she faces six months to three years in prison for attempted obstruction -- will be left up to Meade.

Barnes is scheduled to be sentenced on Feb. 28. That date, seven weeks out, is so Barnes can celebrate her daughter's birthday in late February.

"Because I don't know what will happen here," Barnes said.

Replied Meade: "I don't know what will happen here either."

In September 2010, Barnes was dating Edward D. Mercer, one of three northwest Indiana men accused of participating in a botched armed robbery that turned into a shootout in the parking lot of a Subway restaurant at 3990 Indiana 38 E. No one was injured.

That afternoon, Mercer and his co-defendants were in Lafayette to "buy" Davin chrome wheels that Indianapolis residents Courtney Robinson and Kyle Bostic listed for sale on Craigslist.

The wheels typically list for upward of \$1,000 each.

Barnes on Tuesday admitted to calling Robinson on Sept. 8, 2010, with the SpoofCard service and telling him that Mercer's trial -- slated to begin the next morning in Tippecanoe County -- was moved to Sept. 24, 2010.

She also admitted to telling Robinson that he should call Bostic about the change.

But the two men were suspicious and showed up for the trial anyway to speak with a prosecutor in person.

Barnes told Meade that she got the SpoofCard from the mother of Mercer's codefendant, Jarrod E. Rodriguez.

Mercer and Rodriguez were both found guilty of robbery and theft. The third co-defendant, Rodriguez's father Eugene A. Hall, pleaded guilty to assisting a criminal. All were sentenced to prison time.

January 10, 2012: WLFI TV

Jury trial underway in burglary case

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A jury trial is underway for a Lafayette man accused of multiple felony charges, including burglary and auto theft. The jury will decide the fate of Nicholas Corbin this week in Tippecanoe Circuit Court.

Corbin was arrested in September, after a woman's garage was broken into in West Lafayette. Court documents say police arrested Corbin and Christopher Widner after a high speed chase on State Road 43.

Prosecutors say the two men are responsible for a variety of break-ins, including into the American Legion Post on South Ninth Street.

January 10, 2012: WLFI TV

Police: Man hit neighbor with sledge hammer



Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man is facing felony charges for allegedly hitting his neighbor in the head with a sledge hammer.

59-year-old Paul Wayne Meyer is charged in Tippecanoe County with felony battery and criminal recklessness, as well as a misdemeanor battery charge.

According to court documents filed Tuesday, a neighbor said Meyer rang his doorbell, asked the neighbor why he told his daughter about a former affair, then hit him in the head with a sledge hammer. The neighbor, Berry Layton, said he was also struck in his left arm. Layton said Meyer followed him into his kitchen, and didn't leave until Layton threatened him with a shotgun.

Meyer's wife, Melinda Meyer, told police she and Paul Meyer had recently decided to divorce. She said Meyer was very upset after his daughter told her parents that Layton's daughter, Amy Layton, told her about a previous affair of Paul Meyer's.

Police said they later asked Meyer why he swung the hammer at his neighbor, and Meyer said, "To hurt him."

January 7, 2012: WLFI TV

Lafayette man charged with burglary

Kristin Maiorano

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Lafayette man faces felony charges, for allegedly being caught breaking into a woman's house in the middle of the afternoon.

19-year-old Jesse Crone is charged in Tippecanoe County with four felonies, including burglary, residential entry, attempted theft and possession of a legend drug.

According to court documents, police were called to a Lafayette home this week, after a man claimed he saw someone climb his neighbor's fence and enter the backyard. Officers went in the back door, and found Crone inside.

The investigation revealed Crone had change and a pocket knife in his pocket, that the owner of the home said was hers. Crone also allegedly had pills on him at the time as well.

January 4, 2012: Lafayette Journal and Courier

Dad gets 35 years in heroin sting

Infant tested positive for drug

By SOPHIA VORAVONG; svoravong@jconline.com

First, Demetrius M. Newell was caught selling heroin on four occasions to undercover police officers. Then, his 4-month-old tested positive for both heroin and cocaine.

Now, the Lafayette man is going to prison for 35 years.

Newell, 36, pleaded guilty in December in Tippecanoe Superior Court 2 to dealing in heroin, a Class A felony, neglect of a dependent, a Class C felony, and to being a habitual offender.

He was sentenced Wednesday by Judge Thomas Busch. His prison time will be followed by 13 years on probation.

The charges stem from an investigation by the Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force last June, when officers learned that a woman named "Nicole" was a source for heroin in Tippecanoe County.

Newell accompanied that woman, alleged to be Nicolle C. Stewart, 29, of Lafayette, during a June 3 drug buy made by an undercover detective, according to court documents.

The detective then purchased directly from Newell on June 7, 9 and 14. He was arrested shortly after the June 14 sale, when other officers followed Newell and made a traffic stop.

A child was in the vehicle, too.

Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Newell told officers that he didn't leave home past 10 p.m. for "nothing less than \$100" -- the amount of the June 3 purchase.

Newell admitted to making trips over the past year to Indianapolis two to three times a week to buy heroin, typically \$900 to \$1,600 worth. He then brought it to Lafayette and "cut it" into weaker, smaller amounts for sale.

Officers then got a warrant to search Newell's apartment, which led to the arrest of his fiancée, Kelly S. Thornton, 31, of Lafayette. Thornton allegedly had slurred speech, could not stand up and was falling asleep as officers spoke with her.

Her four children, ages 1 month to 14 years, were home at the time.

Thornton pleaded guilty to possession of a narcotic and four counts of neglect. She was sentenced in November to three years in prison, one year on community corrections and five years on probation.

Stewart, the other alleged heroin seller, is slated to plead guilty Jan. 20 to drug-related offenses.

Newell's habitual conviction was due to prior convictions for armed robbery, robbery and aggravated assault. He's served time in prison in both Indiana and Illinois, Harrington said.

January 4, 2012: WLFI TV

Man sentenced, infant tested for drugs



LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A man was sentenced Wednesday for dealing heroin and child neglect.

Demetrius Newell was sentenced Wednesday afternoon to 35 years in the Indiana Department of Corrections for dealing heroin, a class A Felony and child neglect, a class C Felony.

Newell was arrested after selling heroin to Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force officers.

According to authorities, Newell made two to three trips a week to Indianapolis during June and July of 2011 purchasing between 600 to 4,000 dollars' worth of heroin, which he repackaged and sold in Lafayette.

Newell's 4-month-old infant tested positive for heroin and cocaine, leading to charges of neglect of a dependent.